

25-2-53 b

SCS #1428 b

Thomas F. Torrance

SCS # 14286

LIFE AND REMAINS

OF THE LATE

REV. WILLIAM HAMILTON, D.D.,

MINISTER OF STRATHBLANE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.


GLASGOW:

MAURICE OGLE & SON, ROYAL EXCHANGE SQUARE.

WAUGH & INNES, EDINBURGH.

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO., LONDON.

MDCCCXXXVI.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

ESSAY ON A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

The Necessity for greater Christian Exertion, 9

CHAPTER II.

The Causes of the present languid and limited state
of Religion, 25

CHAPTER III.

The Means of promoting a Revival of Religion, 53

CHAPTER IV.

Motives for increased Religious Exertion, 82

S E R M O N S.

S E R M O N I.

The Extent of the Gospel Call, 99

EXODUS xx. 3.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

S E R M O N II.

The Gospel the Religion of the Poor, 123

1 CORINTHIANS i. 26—29.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

S E R M O N III.

The object of the Believer in his attendance on Religious Ordinances, 155

EXODUS xxxiii. 18.

“I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”

S E R M O N IV.

The Dignity and Use of the Ministry, 175

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 5.

“Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”

SERMON V.

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, 193

EPHESIANS iii. 8.

“ Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

SERMON VI.

The Forgiveness of Injuries, 207

MATTHEW v. 44.

“ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

SERMONS VII. VIII.

The Christian Life, 226, 238

GALATIANS ii. 20.

“ Christ liveth in me.”

SERMON IX.

The Privileges of the Christian Life, 256

EPHESIANS iii. 17.

“ That Christ may dwell in your hearts.”

SERMON X.

The Different Builders, 270

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 10.

“ Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”

SERMON XI.

The Celestial Visitor, 303

REVELATION iii. 20.

“ Behold I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

ERRATA IN VOL. II.

Page 42, line 8, *for* “ effected,” *read* “ affected.”

Page 69, lines 6, 7, *for* “ him,” *read* “ them ;” and line 9, *for* “ his,” *read* “ their.”

Page 112, line 13, *for* “ them,” *read* “ it.”

ESSAY

ON A

REVIVAL OF RELIGION:—

ITS

NECESSITY, AND THE MEANS OF PROMOTING IT.

1880

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

CHAPTER I.

THE NECESSITY FOR GREATER CHRISTIAN EXERTION.

IN an interesting account of a Nias Boy, who was drowned at Greenock, March 1830, we find the following astounding and most humbling fact:—

“ If the whole truth must be told, it is painful to have to admit, that he did *not* improve much by mixing in the company of other boys here, and that latterly he was perhaps contracting some faults that were evidently copied from them.

“ What was more natural? They called themselves Christian children: he was called a heathen boy. Need we wonder if he thought that he could not be far wrong in imitating their example? It is not difficult to discover, however hard it may be submissively to acknowledge, that the early removal of this child was well and wisely ordered, inasmuch as he was doubtless taken away from evil to come. For we had begun to notice, that from his peculiarly social disposition, there was a great risk of his being soon corrupted from the native

ingenuousness of his character, as well as from his simplicity and godly sincerity in Christ.”*

The generous efforts of his pious benefactor were counteracted, and in danger of being frustrated, by the wicked example and pernicious influence of the youth by whom he was surrounded; and if such was the melancholy result of an attempt to educate a heathen child in the Christian religion in such a town as Greenock, the residence of so many eminent Christians, and where so much is done is for the spiritual welfare of the people; how much more fruitless must the experiment have proved, if it had been tried in some of the more neglected cities or districts of our country?

Britain is called a Christian country, and contains many intelligent, sound-hearted, and devoted disciples of the Redeemer. There are numbers who are living under the power of religion, and who are actively and unweariedly engaged in works of piety and beneficence. Various and judicious measures are employed for promoting the temporal comfort and ensuring the everlasting welfare of our brethren. By means of schools of every form, and associations of every name; by libraries; mechanics' institutions; temperance, tract, and Bible societies; by city and parochial missions, thousands are assiduously and strenuously labouring to season the public at home

* The Nias Boy: by the Rev. N. Morren, A.M. 2d Edition. Pp. 65, 72.

with the knowledge and love of religion, and to send the glad tidings of redeeming mercy to the utmost ends of the earth.

But while these institutions are excellent in themselves, and the generous men who support them are entitled to our high approbation; the question is, Are they sufficient for all the purposes of pious beneficence? Has every method been adopted, and every measure put in requisition, which ingenuity can invent or kindness employ, for the renovation of our country, and the evangelization of the world? Are believers improving their own privileges, and striving to stand complete in all the will of God? Are they enriched with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and abounding in all the fruits of righteousness? Has the Church risen to the height of the mighty task before her, and made every sacrifice within her reach for the honour of her Lord and the advancement of his cause? Has she besieged the throne of mercy with an urgency and intensity which can take no denial; and displayed a faith and a fortitude which no difficulties can disconcert, nor any resistance can extinguish or repress? Has she filled the length and breadth of the land with heralds of the Cross, who count every thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; and who cheerfully spend and are spent in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of his grace, and in efforts to gain souls to the enjoyment of his glorious gospel? Has she succeeded in rendering the people all righteous, and in making them the willing and delighted

servants of our Master? Has she fitted out every missionary that she can find, and spent on their support every fraction that she can spare? Has she brought forward all the philanthropy which she encloses, and exhausted all the resources which she possesses, for the conversion of our countrymen and the salvation of our race?

Bound by an authority, which we can neither evade nor question, to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to seek the good of all to their edification, as long as a single human creature remains destitute of the life and power of religion, we are deeply guilty till we have used every argument, and employed every mean to bring him to the knowledge and obedience of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, dare we say that religion every where prospers and prevails? That the empire of Satan is overturned, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ? Dare we affirm that in our own land the dominion of impiety and ignorance, of profligacy and vice, is destroyed; and that its inhabitants are reclaimed to their duty and allegiance to the Most High? Is his character universally known and admired? Is his name habitually revered and adored? Are his Sabbaths every where sanctified, and his ordinances frequented? Are all baptized with the Holy Ghost, crucified with Christ, and living by faith on the Son of God? While relying on his righteousness for their acceptance before God; are they constrained, by his love,

to live not to themselves but to him who died for them and rose again? Are they steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in his work? Is every thing relinquished for his sake; and is each honestly and sincerely endeavouring to do his will in all things, even as it is done in heaven? Is he precious to every heart, and supreme in every man's esteem? Is each glorying in the Cross, and regarding Christ as all his salvation, and all his desire?

If we knew the whole character of God, and felt our dependance upon him; if we were sensible of our guilt and wretchedness, and saw the ineffable infinite obligations which we owe the Lord Jesus Christ, we would prefer him to our chief joy: we would know nothing but him; he would command the admiration of our minds and engross the affections of our hearts; we would live to him entirely, and glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are his. No power could repress the warmth of our gratitude, nor any art seduce us from the cordial attachment and the active services which we owe him. Our country would be a habitation of peace and of piety, and an image of heaven.

But dare we maintain that this is the case? That the people are all righteous? Or even that they are pressing into the kingdom of heaven, and each giving diligence to make his calling and election sure? Instead of exhorting men to flee from the wrath to come, and betake themselves to the hope set before them; have ministers now nothing to do but to build them up on

their holy faith, and keep them in the attitude of constant preparation for the coming of the Son of Man?

If religion consisted in merely receiving the ordinance of baptism, and in assuming the Christian name; if it allowed us to unite the service of God and of Mammon; and, while we entertain the highest conceit of our own virtues and worth, it permitted us to neglect the duties of devotion and benevolence, and to walk according to the course of this world: then Britain might be called a land of Christians, and the gospel would have already accomplished all the objects which it was intended to produce.

But if it be true that the gospel was designed for something nobler and better than merely to varnish the surface of society with a sprinkling of piety, while the great mass is rankling and festering under the virulence of depravity and vice; if it be true that every man in Christ is a new creature, and that they who are his have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts; if it be true that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and they must strive who enter thereat; if it be true that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent take it by force; if it be true that believers are like-minded with their heavenly Master, and that they live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit; if it be true that they do good unto all as they have opportunity, and seek not their own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's; if it be true that they set their affections on things above, have their

conversation in heaven, and are hastening unto the coming of the day of Christ: if all this be true, and who, with the Scriptures in his hand, can doubt its certainty? then, in this favoured nation, and notwithstanding all the privileges which we possess, the number of genuine Christians is small, and we are compelled to tremble at the fewness of those who shall be saved.

Protestant Britain is still the abode of profligacy and vice, and forms a part of that world which lies in wickedness. The greater part of its inhabitants neither know God nor obey the gospel of his Son. They are proud and selfish; arrogant and irritable; covetous and cruel; malicious and revengeful. They are living to themselves, and walking in the sight of their own eyes and in the ways of their own hearts. While keenly solicitous for their temporal gain and worldly enjoyments, they are careless of all that is sacred, and blind to the excellence of all that is divine. To accomplish their secular purposes, religious professors court the alliance, and grasp the aid of the open and implacable enemies of the Cross: but if the slightest difference of opinion intervene, or the smallest hazard to their temporal interests is apprehended, they will deliberately renounce intercourse with the humble and faithful servants of the Saviour, and remorselessly break through all the strong and tender ties which for years had endeared them to their souls. Myriads cannot read the Word of God, and multitudes who occasionally peruse it neither understand nor wish to

comprehend what it contains. Large masses of the population are totally ignorant of the one thing needful; and have no more idea than the ground they tread on of the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. While few accessions are made to the congregations of the faithful, the ranks of Popery, infidelity, and delusion, are daily swelling. Thousands never appear within the walls of the sanctuary. The ordinances of religion are contemned; and the sanctity of the Sabbath incessantly invaded. We can seldom stir from our dwellings without being annoyed with the sounds of blasphemy, or compelled to witness the filth of the sot or the fury of the drunkard. Truth, honour, and honesty, are coolly sacrificed for the most paltry and contemptible gratifications. Under many a roof the worship of the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit, is utterly unknown; and the little family circle, which ought to be the seat of harmony and peace, and the centre of such a number of strong and tender affections, is kept in agitation and terror, or filled with suffering and sorrow by the ferocity and violence of some barbarous tyrant or brutal oppressor. It is dangerous to place children at public schools, lest they shall be corrupted by the vicious practices to which they are exposed; and a home education is often counteracted by the arts of some base and unprincipled domestic. Literary, commercial, and mechanical professions are infested with profligates, and abound with suares. No department in society, nor any branch of business, is safe: and parents, who are solicit-

ous for the everlasting welfare of their offspring, are perplexed what employment to select for their children; and tremble to send them out into the world, lest from the contaminating example and mischievous influence of the graceless, who are swarming in every direction, they shall be returned to them sunk in vice and covered with infamy, and as hackneyed in evil and hardened in impiety as the fiendish monsters by whom they have been misled and ruined.

The periodical and daily press unblushingly proclaim their infidelity, and boldly advocate the cause of irreligion and profligacy. The world is perpetually encroaching on the church, and year after year breaking down the barriers raised by our pious forefathers to withstand its attacks. To escape the sneers of the fashionable, family worship is laid aside; and to avoid the disorders to which it has been subjected, field preaching, which was once such a powerful instrument in advancing the growth of piety, has been abandoned. Gaiety and frivolity have become so general, and the contempt for the institutions and laws of Jehovah, so inveterate and common, that, instead of checking and restraining the impious practices that abound, some of the sacred order are infected with the contagion, oppose every measure of religious reform, plead for the sins that prevail, and lend the weight of their example to extend and aggravate their demoralizing and destructive influence. They will assert the innocence of what the scriptures condemn, and sanction and confirm the increasing secularity of a graceless and ungodly age,

by frequenting places of public amusement, clamouring for Sunday posts, and reading their political journals, and giving and receiving convivial entertainments on the Lord's day.

Our foreign missions languish. Though the fields are white unto harvest, the precious season is lost, because the labourers are few. The want of funds has compelled us in some quarters to contract our operations; and in others, the parsimony of religious professors has obliged us to refuse urgent and persevering applications for spiritual aid. And while unable to overtake the openings for enlarged usefulness abroad, religion has so miserably declined at home, that it is now more difficult to educate a Pagan youth in the principles and practices of the gospel in this country, than in a region of total moral darkness. And in their endeavours to plant our holy faith in heathen lands, whence arise the most formidable obstacles with which our missionaries are called to contend? Not from the ignorance and intolerance, the ferocity and brutality of the wild and barbarous inhabitants, but from the immoral lives, and the anti-christian rancour of British seamen, and British settlers! While the heathen venerate their persons, and respect their property, the baptized crews and colonists from Britain, who, if our country had been thoroughly seasoned with the principles of piety, would have been their warmest friends, and most active auxiliaries, are their most bitter and mischievous foes. They counteract and frustrate the labours of our benevolent agents; excite against them the jealousy and hostility

of the Pagans; revile their characters; endanger their lives; and burn and demolish the buildings which they rear to the worship of the Most High.

With these humbling and appalling facts before us, dare we say that we have undertaken or accomplished all that is within our power for the honour of our God and the salvation of our fellow-immortals? Dare we affirm that we have vigilantly improved our own privileges, and faithfully and affectionately laboured to bring all around us under the purifying and transforming power of the gospel? Have we walked the whole circle of Christian beneficence; and while shining in the beauties of personal holiness, have we employed every method of kindness and of wisdom to gain our brethren to the obedience of the faith?

Unless we are chargeable with a criminal apathy, or adopting very inadequate means for the advancement of the cause of Christ, whence the sad contrast betwixt our languid and stationary condition, and the rapid progress and signal success which attended the publication of the gospel? When Jesus ascended to glory, there were only twelve apostles; and for many years the number of those who could strictly be called preachers was small. But the ministers and their people were possessed of a generosity which knew no bounds, and of a fortitude which no difficulties nor dangers could subdue nor shake! They loved their Master supremely, and threw their whole hearts and souls into his service! An apostle or evangelist seldom visited a city or a town, without

planting a congregation in it; and on his departure, the faithful were so thoroughly imbued with his spirit, that they carried on his work, and acted as missionaries in the streets and villages where they resided! Every believer felt himself answerable for the interest and honour of our holy religion; and, however low his rank, or slender his talents, gratitude to God, and compassion for man, compelled him to exert his best energies to make known the glad tidings of redeeming mercy, and lead his perishing neighbours to attend to their everlasting safety! If the churches were at rest, believers endeavoured to strengthen and establish each other in their attachment to the gospel, and to augment their numbers by accessions from the ranks of idolaters! If the churches were broken up and scattered by persecution, this extended the knowledge of the truth, and accelerated its triumphs: for the dispersed became heralds of the cross, and "went every where preaching the word!" The prisoners of war transported to the scenes of their degradation and bondage the sublime and sacred principles of Christianity, and reduced their rough and ferocious oppressors to subjection to the Prince of Peace. Slaves introduced into the families of their masters the liberty wherewith the Son makes his people free; and whole nations were subdued to the obedience of the faith by the piety and zeal of single captives!

By the blessing of God on the lives and labours of these devoted followers of the Cross, so mightily grew the word of the Lord, and prevailed, that in a few years

Christianity filled Jerusalem and Judea. It steadily held on its course, in spite of every effort to repress or crush it! It resolutely braved every difficulty, and nobly surmounted every obstacle! It gradually pervaded the length and breadth of the dominion of the Cæsars; and, clearing the barriers of the Roman empire, made its blessed and salutary way to the utmost ends of the world! “A little one became a thousand, and a small one a strong nation!” The handful of corn in the earth, on the top of the mountains, shook like Lebanon; and they of the city flourished like the grass of the earth!

And when, betrayed by the repose, and corrupted by the security which their own unparalleled victories had won, believers had lost their first love, and sunk into darkness and delusion; when they had exchanged the simplicity and purity of the gospel for a mass of superstition and absurdity; on the appearance of the Reformers, how speedily was the emancipation of the nations from Popish thralldom obtained! No sooner had the star of the Reformation risen, than all was light; and the churches passed from the horrors of midnight darkness, into the splendours of noon-day. Luther, who had lifted up his solitary voice against the usurpations of Rome, and, single-handed, had defied all the violence of anti-christian despotism, before he entered his eternal rest saw that colossal power torn in pieces, and the banner of the Cross waving gallantly over many a free and independent state.

And since our Reformers were gathered to their

fathers, there have been times when the gospel has had similar free course, and been glorified. Speaking of the period that intervened betwixt 1638, and the restoration of Charles II. Kirkton says,—“ At the King’s return, every parish had a minister, every village had a school, every family almost had a Bible ; yea, in almost all the country every child could read the Scriptures, and were provided of Bibles either by their parents or their ministers. Every minister was a very full professor of the Reformed religion, according to the large Confession of Faith, framed at Westminster by the divines of both nations. Every minister was obliged to preach thrice a-week, to lecture and catechise once, besides other private duties, wherein they abounded, according to their proportion of faithfulness and abilities. None of them might be scandalous in their conversation, or negligent in their office, so long as a Presbytery stood ; and among them were many holy in conversation, and eminent in gifts ; the dispensation of the ministry being fallen from the noise of waters, and sound of trumpets, to the melody of harpers, which is, alas ! the last mess in the banquet : nor did a minister satisfy himself, except his ministry had the seal of a divine approbation, as might witness him to be really sent from God. Indeed, in many places, the Spirit seemed to be poured out with the word, both by the multitude of sincere converts, and also by the common work of reformation upon many who never came the length of a communion. I have lived many years in a parish where I never heard an oath, and you might

have ridden many miles before you heard any; also, you could not, for a great part of the country, have lodged in a family where the Lord was not worshipped by reading, singing, and public prayer.”*

When, therefore, we reflect on the small band, in the primitive ages, to whom was entrusted the task of conquering the world, and recollect the rapid, and signal success which crowned their labours; when we look at the straggling and helpless appearance of the first Reformers, and remember the stupendous revolution which they so quickly achieved, why is religion in such a languid and stationary state? When for years and ages our land has enjoyed such external tranquillity, and possessed such multitudes who make a profession of religion, and so many who have experienced its renovating power, why are so few additions made to the church? Why are such multitudes destitute of the knowledge, and influence of the truth, and openly and avowedly trampling under foot the authority and grace of the Most High? Instead of lengthening her cords, strengthening her stakes, and stretching abroad her curtains, why is our Zion cooped up within her ancient dimensions, and obliged to exert her vigilance to prevent a diminution of her extent, and a decrease of her numbers? Instead of fermenting the whole mass of the people with the leaven of the gospel, and covering the earth with our missions,

* Kirkton's History of the Church of Scotland, p. 64.

why are so many nations allowed to remain without the labours of the ambassadors of peace, and such numbers beside us left to live in vice, and sink into perdition?

Would the Reformers, or first Christians, have been guilty of such tameness, and displayed a spirit of such cold and selfish indifference? Instead of making known the high requisitions of the Almighty, and seriously striving to raise all to the lofty standard of the gospel; would they have coolly submitted to see the authority of God undermined, his demands despised and evaded, and one religious principle and practice after another sacrificed to the perverse maxims and the graceless customs of an ungodly world? Would they have folded their arms in indolence, and looked on in listlessness; while piety was declining, and vice and profligacy regaining the ascendancy? They would manfully have encountered every hazard; they would have lifted up their voice like a trumpet; they would have strained every effort, and employed every mean to rouse the most sluggish and reclaim the most abandoned; and they never would have relaxed their generous and godlike exertions, till they had covered our country with the knowledge of the Lord, and sent the gospel of his grace to the utmost ends of the earth. Regarding themselves as the servants of the Most High, and assured of his protection and blessing, they would have boldly and resolutely persevered in their benevolent undertaking, till the people were all righteous, and the whole world filled with his glory.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAUSES OF THE PRESENT LANGUID AND LIMITED STATE
OF RELIGION.

WITHOUT the assistance of the press, and without the aid of books and schools, by means of a handful of preachers, the gospel, in less than three hundred years, overturned the idolatry of the Roman empire, and carried its benign and salutary influence to many nations lying beyond the reach of the arts and arms of that haughty mistress of the world. And, though labouring under many disadvantages from which we are free, and destitute of much of the moral machinery which is placed at our command, the Reformers in a short period emancipated our country from Papal ignorance and thralldom, and planted the doctrines and ordinances of our holy religion in many of the kingdoms of Europe. When, therefore, we consider the vast and prodigious advantages which we enjoy, what might have been reasonably expected from the hosts of ministers and men of piety in Britain during three centuries of peace and liberty? It might surely have been anticipated, that, over the extent of our islands, the people would have all known the Lord; and, while walking in his fear, and in the comforts

of the Holy Ghost, would have exhibited a specimen of the purity, and possessed a foretaste of the bliss of heaven.

Why, then, instead of advancing, is religion in such a languid and contracted state? Instead of gathering fresh strength and courage for her toils, and vigorously pushing forward her victories; why does she appear exhausted and overcome, and as if terrified to meet her foes, allow such multitudes at home to remain in carnality and crime, and abroad leave the prince of darkness in such undisturbed possession of his power? Has the gospel lost its force? Has the arm of Him who wields the sceptre of creation, and has the management and charge of the interests of Zion, been deprived of its energy and might? No: Jesus has still all power in heaven and in earth; and is the same to-day that he was yesterday, and has been for ever. The gospel is still the rod of his strength; and is endowed with a virtue and a vigour sufficient to lay prostrate the strongholds of Satan, and subdue all nations to the obedience of the faith.

But, while the kindness and care of Emanuel are still the same, and the gospel is still the wisdom of God and the power of God, we ourselves are to blame for the stationary or retrograde condition of Christianity. We have not been faithful to our trust, nor done justice to the grace and resources of the gospel. We have not vigilantly improved our opportunities, nor made a suitable use of our privileges.

Among the causes which have contributed to the present deplorable religious languor and lifelessness which we witness, we are obliged to notice the following:

I. The neglect of the State to make adequate provision for the religious instruction and spiritual welfare of all the inhabitants of the nation.

The first duty of every man is to become a Christian. The command to repent and believe the gospel, is the law of the world. It is an obligation laid on the conscience of every man by the God that made him. The highest is not above its control, nor the lowest beneath its reach. Till we understand its nature, and submit to its authority, we are rebels against the Divine government, and in the day of decision will be held as usurpers upon the bounties of Providence. Whatever rank we possess, and whatever situation we occupy, we are bound to love God with our whole heart, and serve him with all our strength and mind. And though we should hide ourselves in the grave, and go down to perdition, we never, through eternity, could escape the force of these obligations.

The first duty of every Christian parent is conscientiously to employ the most efficient means to bring all his children under the saving influence of the gospel; and if this primary and indispensable duty is neglected, whatever measures he may employ for their bodily health, their mental improvement, and temporal prosperity, he is chargeable alike with rebellion against the God of heaven, and cruelty towards his offspring.

And is there one law for the subject and another for the sovereign? Are the people required, by the command of the Most High, to be religious and devout, and each to convert his house into a dwelling of the God of heaven? but are the rulers at liberty to live to themselves, and serve the world, the flesh, or the devil? Was Abraham enjoined, in his private capacity, to command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment? But would he have been released from these obligations, if his pilgrimage had been extended through twenty centuries; and if, in the lapse of time, his rank and power had risen to royalty, and he had found himself seated on the throne of Asia, and swaying the sceptre over the numerous nations of his descendants? Provided that they obeyed his civil enactments, and were ready with their services in peace and in war, was he tamely to allow them to modify their religious opinions and practices according to their varying humours, and give himself no concern whether they worshipped God or Baal? And are kings and legislators now warranted either to neglect personal religion, or forbear to furnish the whole population with the means of religious instruction and everlasting salvation?

The will cannot be forced; nor the understanding carried by storm. Neither sovereign nor subject is authorized to persecute or put heretics to death. After using all humane and rational measures to enlighten and reclaim the erroneous, they must be left to themselves.

Unless their false tenets lead on to criminal practices, and prompt them to disturb the peace and endanger the safety of society, we must let them alone, and allow them to stand or fall to their own master.

But while we plead for the most free and unlimited toleration: we maintain that it is the duty of the magistrate to defend and propagate the religion published in the volume of inspiration; and to employ, to the utmost of his power, every measure of instruction and persuasion to reclaim every heretic, to convert every profligate, and guide all his people into the way of everlasting felicity. The father and the master are answerable for all in their family who are lost through their carelessness and sloth. Abraham would have been accountable for every child and domestic who, through his indolence and inattention, would have been permitted to live and die in a state of ignorance and carnality. Rulers are the common parents of their people. And, let them disguise the matter as they will, if they knowingly and deliberately leave any destitute of the means of religious instruction, and of access to the gospel and its ordinances, they are chargeable before God with all the tremendous consequences that will follow.

Ignorance of the Christian system they cannot plead, since that is clearly revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. If without any particular interest in the study, and without any other guide than their own writings, we can ascertain from the works of Bacon and Newton the principles of their philosophy; when every man has such

a momentous concern in the subject, and when so many helps are provided for understanding the Word of God; if any legislator sets himself honestly to the task, where is the difficulty of ascertaining distinctly the doctrines and duties of Divine revelation?

And if legislators cannot allege ignorance as an apology for neglecting to use their authority for promoting genuine religion, still less can they assert that it is below their notice. To be the servant of the King of kings is an honour which elevates the rank of an angel, and confers additional majesty on the dignity of the highest earthly potentate; and it is the most useful and delightful exercise of human benevolence. Whatever reason rulers may have for guarding their subjects from internal turbulence and foreign aggression, they are a thousandfold more bound to preserve them from the tyranny of Satan and the fury of their own lusts and passions: and, whatever solicitude they may feel to diffuse the blessings of civil liberty and temporal prosperity, they are still more imperatively required to exert themselves for the moral improvement and eternal welfare of the people. The former is the object of human philanthropy: the latter is the end of that which is divine. In the one, patriots and statesmen may toil: but in the other, the Creator and possessor of all spent his labour and poured out his blood. And however important or valuable in their own place, the political, fiscal, or commercial arrangements of a state sink as far

below its religious and moral prosperity, as earth is inferior to heaven, and time less than eternity.

Plain, however, and obvious as these facts are, they have long been overlooked by the British Legislature. The piety or superstition of our popish ancestors provided the most munificent endowments for the service of religion. But, whatever might be the personal character of the sovereign or his ministers; with all their zeal for social order or popular rights, our Protestant kings and their Protestant cabinets were for ages the spoilers or plunderers of the church, and at all times the most parsimonious and niggardly friends and benefactors of piety. While they eagerly grasped at the revenues of the Romish priesthood, they have doled out their favours to religion and learning with the most cautious and sparing hand. Over large provinces of the empire no provision is made for the education of the people. Villages have swelled into towns, and thinly peopled districts are now densely crowded; but still the church accommodation remains in its ancient narrow dimensions. Parishes have been conjoined, and places of worship suppressed to get rid of the expense of maintaining two churches and two clergymen. Obstacles, nearly insurmountable, have been thrown in the way, to prevent the subdivision of parishes and the multiplication of churches for our perishing countrymen and brethren. And when Parliament has lent its tardy aid to relieve some of our more destitute rural districts, what have been the mighty salaries appropriated for the maintenance of the pastor?

A sum little more than is assigned as a remuneration for the lowest officer of excise. While the religious and educational statistics of Britain remain, posterity will at once admire the munificence of our popish progenitors, and blush for the parsimony of their Protestant descendants. Amidst the most lavish prodigality in our secular concerns, we have displayed the most niggardly and miserable penuriousness in the cause of God. Whilst the navy of Britain could scarcely float the sums which since the Reformation have been squandered on war, a single dray could easily carry all that our Protestant government has judged religion and education entitled to receive from the funds of the nation.

The consequences of this neglect have been most mischievous. From the want of church accommodation multitudes have been excluded from the means of religious instruction. Where people possessed wealth and piety, they procured, by their own exertions, the administration of the Word and ordinances of God. But how could the large masses of our population, who were alike destitute of seriousness and of worldly substance, supply by their own efforts the deficiencies of the State? Mahometans will as soon solicit missions to convert them to Christianity, or sots combine for the suppression of debauchery, as graceless men will spontaneously return and seek after God. And however willing, men in indigence are utterly unable to provide for the relief of their spiritual wants. Hence a large proportion of our people, who, under a better treatment,

would have been the bright ornaments of piety, and our active auxiliaries in the cause of Christian benevolence, have been suffered to grow up without the knowledge and enjoyment of the gospel, to swell the tide of vice and profligacy, and to strengthen the resistance to the moral renovation of our age, and the diffusion of religion through the world.

But this is only one part of the evil for which the national Legislature is responsible. While the Government refused to do her duty, and sternly declined to stir when she was bound to move—she has wrought incalculable and irreparable mischief, by interfering with matters utterly beyond her province, and with which she has nothing to do. This has been most lamentably illustrated by—

II. The Establishment of Church Patronage.

In all her laws and regulations, the Church of Christ is free and independent. The Lord is her King: the Lord is her lawgiver. He has placed his word in her hands for her guidance, and to him alone she is accountable for the exercise of her rights, and the use which she makes of her privileges. No power on earth is warranted to interpose betwixt her and her glorious Head—nor authorised to dictate to her in what manner the pastoral relation shall be formed betwixt the congregation and the minister, any more than to prescribe the portions of Scripture which she shall read, or the language which she shall employ in prayer. The Christian ministry is the purchase of the Lord Jesus Christ, and bequeathed as a

precious legacy to his people. Christians have no more warrant to surrender this privilege, than to renounce their right to the blessings of redeeming mercy; and no civil power has a title to deprive them of this prerogative, any more than to wrest from them the Scriptures of truth, or debar them access to the throne of grace.

But has the Government of Britain left the church to the free and unfettered exercise of her inherent prerogatives and rights? No: that Government which rigidly withheld additional accommodation, and which, from year to year, sanctioned the annexation of parish to parish—more than a century ago wrenched from the Christian people of Scotland the right of choosing their own pastor. And with whom did they lodge this important and invaluable power? With a body of men pre-eminent for moral worth, and religious knowledge and zeal? With a body of men whose excellence had gained the admiration of all the faithful in the land, and whose praises were ringing in all the churches of Christ? With a body of men whose pious deeds, and spiritual attainments, were manifestly superior to those of the members of the body of Christ,—who were born from above, and living under the powers of the world to come? In making appointments in the army or navy, in law or medicine, the selection is generally delegated to men who are capable of judging of the qualifications of the respective candidates, and who are amenable to a controlling power for the judicious exercise of their trust. But in seizing on this right so dear to every Christian in North Britain, a

power which apostles would have been afraid to wield, and for which even angels would have found themselves unequal—the British Legislature deemed any pre-requisite for its exercise, altogether superfluous. Instead of devolving the right on a spiritual body, of acknowledged worth and tried integrity, chosen by the Christian public, the Government committed the power to patrons—a class of men who are not obliged to possess any religious qualifications at all—who acquire the right by succession or by purchase—who are not bound to be in communion with any church whatever—and who may be openly and avowedly living without God, and without Christ in the world.

The most implacable enemy to vital godliness, could scarcely have desired any more disastrous and fatal fruits, than those which have been abundantly reaped from this preposterous, and anti-scriptural system. Though we have always had some patrons who knew, and loved the gospel, and have selected the best, and ablest presentees whom they could find,—the great majority of patrons neither understood, nor valued the truths which constitute the essence and glory of the scheme of redemption. Confounding piety with fanaticism, and mistaking seriousness and zeal for bigotry, superstition, and a love of popular applause—they entertained a deep-rooted antipathy to every thing which possessed the appearance of sincerity and earnestness. They rigidly proscribed all whom they suspected of feeling the power of religion, and whom

they feared as likely to urge upon their hearers the paramount importance of piety. They strained every nerve to crush the persons, and counteract the labours of the ministers who cared for the souls committed to their charge. Their friendship and their favour were reserved for the men who were expected to be the most strenuous champions of the claims of patrons, and the most stern and inexorable opponents of popular rights and interests; and who, while most notorious for their party zeal, and political subserviency, would carry into their sacred function the smallest portion of life and ardour, and prove most conspicuous for doctrinal insipidity, and personal and official laxity.

The dry and heartless ministrations of these men, starved and disgusted the serious and intelligent portion of the people, who were obliged either to abandon the Established Church, or submit to a tame and frigid exhibition of the all-important truths of religion. For, in order to complete the evils of this invasion on the rights of the Christian people—while the nomination of ministers to vacant congregations, was entrusted to men who were neither able nor willing to make a proper choice; by the same tenure by which they held the right of presenting to the existing church, they were also constituted patrons of all the churches which ever should be built within the parish. The people were thus effectually precluded from redress: for, if to enjoy the gospel and its ordinances in their purity and power, they had

built another church, the patron would have exercised his legal right, and sent them another presentee as like as possible to the former.

Where the people were possessed of wealth, they reared a meeting-house, in which they retained their freedom, and could enjoy a more wholesome and animating dispensation of the word of life. But if destitute of the means of providing for their edification from their own resources, they were obliged to mourn in secret. The first generation might preserve their piety: but from the unhappy circumstances in which they were placed, few in the second generation ever felt its efficacy. Under the blighting influence of patronage, religion declined and withered; and it was easy to trace the progress of the system, by the absence of substantial godliness, and the return of worldly principles and practices to the soil which had been hallowed by the prayers and tears, the virtues and the blood of our sainted ancestors.

By the indiscreet exercise of patronage, many a parish church has been laid desolate; and by excluding the people from the right of choosing their own ministers, however much the population might increase, a complete stop was put to additional church accommodation. Whether the parish church was overflowing in consequence of the faithful labours of an able pastor, or deserted because of the feeble and inefficient services of some weak, insignificant incumbent—the people were equally compelled, either to renounce their attendance on religious ordinances, or abandon the establishment. In the latter,

case they lost their attachment to the national church. In the former, a great proportion of their descendants lost their attachment to religion itself.

Those who have advocated the cause of patronage, from the hope that it would gradually undermine the influence of living evangelical holiness, and sink our country in vice and profligacy, may exult in the success of their favourite scheme. By its restless activity, and multiplied ramifications, it has done more than all other causes united to defeat the purposes of the Reformation, to set the consciences of men loose from the restraints of religion, and fill our country with turbulence and discontent.

In some districts it has effectually prevented the entrance of genuine godliness; and from other quarters where religion had made a lodgment, it has gone far to expel the knowledge and practice of piety, and has thus perverted the funds destined for the support of our Establishment, into the means of rearing the most implacable enemies to her existence, and the most inveterate foes to the cause of Christ and of God.

III. The Want of Education.

Many people, in every rank, now possess more learning and information than was enjoyed by our ancestors. But in consequence of the great demand for juvenile labour, and the dissipated habits of some parents, the education of the young is deplorably neglected, and ignorance of letters is every day becoming less and less shameful.

While some are never taught at all, the education of

others is so superficial and defective, that it is utterly useless. They cannot make their way through the plainest composition. The parents have never improved their own minds, and are destitute of a taste and a relish for anything that is elevated and intellectual. They cannot comprehend the importance of the mental or moral improvement of their offspring—and imagine that all is well, as long as the gross and grovelling habits of their children are not more revolting and odious than their own. Whatever sums may be lavished on vice or folly, one fraction is never spent on a publication. The library or book shop may be daily within their sight—but they no more than a grave-stone think of visiting them; and unless a tract or a volume be occasionally bestowed on them by the hand of benevolence, they never become owners of a single article that has passed through the press.

Ignorance is a sad barrier to the success of religion. For, though knowledge and piety are totally distinct—so that many may possess the greatest amount of learning, while absolutely destitute of vital godliness,—still a cultivated understanding, and a portion of general information, are peculiarly subservient to the reception of the gospel. If the apartment be without an aperture, it must remain dark, even in the blaze of day. And while a man is a stranger to the first principles of the oracles of God, amidst the most plain, forcible, and rousing proclamations of the doctrines of the cross, he sits unmoved. The very language which the preacher employs, is unintelli-

gible. He has never tried to affix an idea to the most familiar terms in theology: and amidst the warmth and vehemence of the ambassador of God, he stares, and wonders, and perishes. The apartment which is furnished with a window, is fitted to receive light on the return of day. And the man who has been trained in the elements of religion, and who is accustomed to the exercise of his mental powers, affords a fine subject for the expostulations and appeals of the Christian minister. He understands the language, follows the reasoning, and can reflect on the conclusions of the speaker. His affections may be closed, and hardened against the truth. But the truth is at least intelligible: and we are not obliged at once to contend with the refractoriness of a stubborn heart, or the darkness of a blinded mind.

IV. Intemperance.

Seldom or never have our countrymen shown a more keen and ravenous appetite for intoxicating liquors, than in the present day. The practice of using them as marks of courtesy, and means of conviviality, has been adopted by men of every rank and class in society: and protected by the example of Christian ministers, and of people who make a profession of religion. Multitudes are encouraged openly and avowedly to employ them for the means of the most degrading and beastly inebriation.

But though intemperance is sanctioned by the convivial customs of the sober, and is rendered fashionable by the habitual practices of tipplers of every station, few vices are more ensnaring, brutalizing, and ruinous. It

darkens the understanding, and hardens the heart. It thickens the coating of ignorance and insensibility that encrusts the carnal mind, and gives tenfold strength and activity to all the malevolent and furious passions that rankle in the soul. To enjoy their cups, the debauched abandon domestic duties and secret devotion. Their property melts away; their clothes and furniture disappear; their children are allowed to grow up in ignorance, and indulge in habits of profligacy and impiety. From the want of suitable apparel, they are unable to enter the house of God; or if ever they visit the sanctuary, their sordid habits have rendered its services insipid and irksome.

From the fascinating attractions which dissipation possesses, and the virulent influence which it exerts, a single tippling-house is generally sufficient to undo the exertions of the most laborious clergyman; one gin palace will counteract the efforts of the whole ecclesiastical corps of a cathedral; and the distillers and retailers of ardent spirits, diffuse twice more mischief through the country, than all the good that is accomplished by the various ministers of the gospel. And when the friends of religion have to contend with such fearful odds, is it wonderful to see the sad and dreary moral spectacle which our native land presents?

V. Political Zeal.

Every man who regards his own safety and comfort, the welfare of his neighbours, and the benefit of his descendants, must feel a lively interest in the civil insti-

tutions and temporal prosperity of his country. Religion and learning, liberty and humanity, are so closely and inseparably bound up in the laws and government of the land, that every friend to piety and philanthropy must be naturally and necessarily led to lend his earnest attention to every measure by which these great and momentous subjects can be either directly or remotely effected. So far from withdrawing his presence, and his services from the affairs of the state, and leaving the irreligious part of the community to give laws to the nation, it is the duty of every man who fears the Lord, to come openly and boldly forward to lend his aid to spread sound political principles, and raise to the office of legislators, men who at once are the subjects of the King of Heaven, and the firm and enlightened friends of humanity.

But though politics are an important subject, they are very far from being the first concern of an immortal. A Christian will both injure the cause of his country, and hurt the prosperity of his own soul, if he allow his political zeal to engross his attention, to withdraw him from his more urgent and appropriate duties, to disturb the serenity of his mind, or betray him into feelings of acrimony and rancour, or even of distance and dryness towards his opponents.

Wherever such a spirit prevails, religion declines and languishes ; and a sour, unsocial, worldly, and ungodly temper soon occupies its place. Few results can be more pernicious or shameful. But in various quarters

politics have of late been such an absorbing topic, that they have at the same time destroyed the kindly intercourse of life, and eaten the heart and substance out of the little religion which their partisans possessed.

VI. Religious Controversy.

In this imperfect state, where we are sanctified only partially, and know merely in part, it cannot be expected that we shall all see eye to eye, and be in every thing of one mind. No part of revealed truth is insignificant, nor any scriptural practice or precedent unimportant. The very tongs and snuffers of the tabernacle were to be all of pure gold. Every institution, every precept and doctrine possesses the stamp and sanction of the Almighty; and it is at our peril that we overlook, or undervalue them. We are enjoined to buy the truth, and not to sell it; to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The very fact or circumstance which we disregard or despise, may be connected with matters of the mightiest consequence. By relinquishing the smallest portion of the Christian system, we may create an opening for the entrance of the most pernicious delusions, and destructive practices.

But while pleading for the paramount authority of Scripture, and the necessity of giving a cordial submission to its dictates, on every subject, however apparently small and insignificant, we must deplore the endless wrangling and contention of religious controversy. In the gospel, as well as in the law, there are matters of greater

weight and importance, and matters of less. Now, while the world lies in wickedness, and the graceless are agreed in giving their time and their strength to levity and folly, to vice and impiety—while they are hurrying on to everlasting misery, and dragging all over whom they have influence, to perdition; is it wise or safe for the friends of religion to be incessantly agitating the church, and distracting the minds of their brethren with strifes of words, and contentions about affairs of inferior moment, or of doubtful disputation? When the walls of our common temple are rising so slowly—when the enemy is at the gate, and perpetually striving to undermine, or throw down the building—is it reasonable or decent to set the workmen a-quarrelling what stone they shall next place, and what beam they shall next fix? And when the interests of vital godliness are so vigorously assailed from every quarter, is it kind or prudent in the defenders of our mutual faith, to waste their own energies, and fritter away the exertions of their brethren, by needless or unprofitable debates about matters of trifling import, or uncertain meaning? When the honour of God, and the salvation of souls are at stake, we cannot be too earnest, resolute, and persevering. But why consume our time and strength about rites and ceremonies, feasts, and festivals? Can it affect the success of his ministry, or alter the nature of the truth he utters, whether the preacher addresses his hearers in a coat, a cloak, or gown? whether his means are drawn from the pockets of his hearers, or an endowment by their ancestors? Yet, more

time, energy, and zeal have been lavished in discussions about the vestments of the clergy—the funds from which they should be maintained—the day for celebrating Easter, or whether Easter should be celebrated at all, and other trifles equally diminutive and despicable, than in attempting to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and carry the gospel of redeeming mercy round our perishing world. By undervaluing the leading and substantial articles of the Christian system—by exaggerating and magnifying those of minor importance, many waste their own talents in idle or hurtful contention,—and by obliging those whom they disturb and annoy, to defend their own principles and practices, they withdraw their attention from the common enemy, and render them comparatively unprofitable. They may succeed in demonstrating to their own satisfaction a few of their own crudities: but in the meantime, they have allowed thousands of immortal souls to pass into eternity without any kind or persevering efforts to awaken and save them. While wrangling about the dress and ornaments of the army, they allow their country to be overrun and ruined.

VII. General Preaching.

Though the great body of ministers may be distinguished for their piety and talents, some of them mistake the means of rendering their labours most efficient. Instead of seizing on the great and leading features of the gospel, and stating them with the affection and force of men who see their matchless grandeur, and feel their irresistible power, they sometimes give tame, partial, and

defective views of divine truth. Instead of applying the doctrines of the gospel to the hearts and consciences of their audience, they set to work to combat practices, or refute opinions, of which few in their congregation have heard. Where the people are perishing through ignorance and apathy, they labour to fortify them against the attractions of deistical literature, and the sophistry of philosophical infidelity. Where the great majority are on the side of the world, they are instructed in the dangers of religious divisions. Where the people are strangers to the first principles of the oracles of God, they are entertained with disquisitions on morality, history, or prophecy. And in some cases where evangelical truth is preached, the style and cast of the composition are so elaborate and refined, as to render the discourse utterly unintelligible, and absolutely unimpressive to the great body of the hearers. Some preachers are so flippant and finical, that they necessarily inspire a doubt of their sincerity—and are more calculated to drive men into scepticism, than to gain them over to the faith. And others, from a constitutional diffidence, are deterred from launching out into the fulness and freeness of the gospel, and melting the hearts of their hearers with the wonders of this plan of infinite benignity and grace.

VIII. Low, and inadequate ideas of the nature and importance of genuine religion.

Subordinate to its spiritual benefits, and eternal advantages, the gospel produces many valuable and delightful temporal effects. It diffuses information, refinement, and

virtue among the people. It teaches them industry, sobriety, economy, and foresight. It introduces them to a large share of secular prosperity, and adds prodigiously to their mental dignity and social enjoyments.

Now, because religion improves the character, and confers many temporal benefits on its possessors, some mistake the accompaniments of piety for its substance and essence, and suppose that the grand, or only object at which we are to aim, is the improvement of the morals and condition of our brethren. They fancy if the carriage is elegant and comfortable, that there is no necessity for attending to the health and safety of the traveller.

But we must remember that, whatever benefits or blessings religion may throw around the lot of the Christian in his pilgrimage to Zion, the great and matchless excellence of the gospel is, that it renovates our nature, and gives us a meetness for heaven. Till these effects are accomplished, we may profess and believe what we please, but we have no connection with Christ, and no part in the blessings of his salvation. Our nature is totally vitiated and diseased. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. The spirit that is in us lusteth to envy. We are carnal, and sold under sin. Our heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

And when such is the natural condition of every human creature, while the soul is left under the degrading and polluting power of sin, what signifies an accession of knowledge to the understanding, or of decency to the

life? These may have their value in society, and be serviceable to us in the house of our pilgrimage. But before God, and in reference to eternity, they are of the very smallest moment. An outward polish, and superficial reformation, cannot meet the exigencies of our case, nor prepare us for a safe and triumphant immortality. When the machinery is gone, can a new case or dial restore the clock or watch to its proper functions? When disease has reached the heart, and mastered the vital organs, can the patient be preserved by a change of dress, or an alteration in his posture? And when our minds are alienated from God, and our hearts and affections are disordered and unclean, can an external reformation eradicate our moral maladies, and fit our souls for the delights and services of heaven? We must be born again. However useful and important in their own place, social virtue and outward decorum never can raise us from the ruins of the fall, nor prepare us for the world of bliss: and we are only deceiving ourselves while we are resting on our moral duties, or religious observances, while destitute of an inward, and thorough transformation. A man may have a clear head, with a hard heart; polished manners, along with an ungodly mind; and a sober, and respectable deportment, while his inward parts are very wickedness. But though we should possess the science of a Newton, and the mental energies of a Bacon, the philanthropy of a Howard, and the virtue of a Cato; unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good

works, and blessed with a clean heart and a right spirit, we are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, without God, and without hope.

In religion, the Lord Jesus Christ is all and in all. He not only occupies the first and highest place, but is raised infinitely above every rival and competitor, every coadjutor and ally, and reigns unrivalled and alone. If heaven be loftier than the earth, and the compass of the universe greater than a span, the Creator must be higher than the creature, and more great and glorious than the whole works of his hands. But the Lord Jesus Christ is divine. He is the Creator, and Lord of all: and therefore, the surrender of Him for our redemption, as far transcends all the other gifts of the generosity and munificence of the Most High, as eternity exceeds time, or immensity surpasses an atom.

Now, till we are in some measure sensible of the value of this unspeakable gift, and discover its infinite superiority to the bounties of Providence, and the riches of grace—and till we do justice to his compassion and kindness, and yield him that return of adoring love and gratitude to which he is entitled, we have no claim whatever to the Christian character.

But we never can do justice to his generosity and grace, till we understand the design of his mission, and embrace the great object of his undertaking. Now, the design of his mission, and the great object of his undertaking, were to save his people from their sins, and redeem us from the curse of the law, by being made a

curse for us. We, therefore, never can be Christians till we renounce all for his sake ; till we embrace his salvation, and rest on his righteousness simply and exclusively as the only ground of our acceptance before the Lord.

And as the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, so immeasurably excels all the other manifestations of divine liberality and benignity—we never can render a suitable return to his compassion and grace, till we prefer him to our chief joy, and count all but loss for his sake. While resting on his righteousness for pardon, peace, and every blessing in time and in eternity, his love will constrain us to live, not to ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again. We will cheerfully comply with every intimation of his pleasure, and be constantly occupied with his service. Whatever our hand findeth to do, we will do with our might. We will be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in his work. And while habitually employed in his cause, we will study to perform our duties effectually, and to purpose ; preserving such a simplicity of aim, such a singleness of heart, such a reliance on his grace, and such a devotedness to his honour, that God in all things may be glorified in us, and by us.

To all that has been already stated, it must be added that much evil has been occasioned by the neglect of domestic devotion. Our forefathers took care to maintain the daily worship of God in their families. In the absence of the master, the servant or journeyman offici-

ated in his room ; and the household would have dreaded the judgments of the Most High, if they had dared to retire to rest without placing themselves under his protection, and imploring his blessing and favour.

There has of late been a lamentable relaxation in parental instruction. In former years parents were never satisfied till their children were thoroughly grounded in the principles of Christianity, so that they could easily distinguish betwixt truth and error. Hence, the readiness with which our ancestors detected any deviation from the doctrines of the gospel in the ministrations on which they attended. But now many cannot discern the difference betwixt legal and evangelical preaching, and lavish their praise indiscriminately on any discourse which displays talent or oratory, whatever may be the creed which it inculcates.

Religion has suffered much from a decline of personal piety. The present generation of Christians are at less pains than their predecessors to attend to the state of their hearts—to mark their progress or declension in the Christian life—and to set apart times for meditation, fasting, and prayer. In order to meet the circumstances of their congregations, ministers formerly were obliged to apply their discourses to the different cases of their flocks, and to direct and encourage such of their hearers as were harrassed with fears that they were hypocrites, and self-deceivers, or sinking into a state of spiritual languor and deadness. But few hearers in modern times are troubled with such distress. They are almost all in

peace, and full of hope and confidence; and whether in the pulpit, or at the sick-bed, the minister is seldom required to state or illustrate the characteristic features of sincerity and hypocrisy, of liveliness and spiritual languor.

The want of united persevering prayer for the prosperity of Zion, has contributed greatly to the languid state of vital godliness.

But, however injurious these causes may have been to the interests of religion, this chapter is already too long to allow any enlargement upon their hurtful effects.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEANS OF PROMOTING A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

THE great object at which we are to aim, in our attempts to diffuse the influence of religion, indicates the measures by which the life and power of piety can be most easily and effectually secured. The grand end which we are bound to keep in view, is to bring all men to embrace the provisions of the gospel; and while they rest on the atonement of Christ for their acceptance before God, to devote themselves cordially and unreservedly to his interest and honour. And as this is the noble and blessed result, to the attainment of which we must lend our efforts—it is obvious that, whatever has hitherto counteracted or retarded the accomplishment of such a delightful consummation, must be instantly and for ever abandoned—and that our best energies must be directed to encourage and foster whatever is calculated to ensure its success, and accelerate its triumphs.

I. Prompt and decisive measures must be taken to cover the length and breadth of the land with the means necessary for the religious instruction and spiritual welfare of the people.

Every part of the country must be broken down into manageable districts. Each of these must be provided with a church and a pastor; and the most effectual measures must be employed, to see that this pastor is a man of God, who will spontaneously, and unreservedly devote himself to the duties of his vocation. We need more churches,—hundreds and thousands of additional churches. But we want no dormitories, where drowsy incumbents may sleep out their monotonous and useless life. We wish for more churches to the flocks gathered round them by the patient, laborious, kind-hearted, and hard-working ministers of Christ. Surgeons are appointed to the army and navy, not to spend their pay, and study their own enjoyment and ease, but to watch over the health, and attend to the safety and comfort of the soldiers and seamen. And churches are built and endowed, not for the personal benefit of the minister, but for the advantage of the parish. It is his duty to watch for their souls—to live and labour among them as an ambassador of Christ—and never to rest till he has made known to each of them the riches of redeeming mercy, and brought them all to the enjoyment of the great salvation.

Without a pious and laborious clergy, additional churches would be a mere waste of public money, and a mockery of the moral wants and sufferings of the people. And without a greater number of churches, the exertions of the most devout and indefatigable clergymen, in our densely crowded districts, must be very much in vain. From the chilling and benumbing effects of the want of

Sabbath ministrations, the affectionate and Christian attentions of the pastor through the week, must be sadly impaired, or utterly defeated.

The duty of all who wish well to the prosperity of religion, is to employ the most efficient means, whether by Parliamentary aid, or private contribution, to have a sufficient number of churches planted over the country—to render the gospel accessible to every inhabitant of Britain—and to have every district provided with its appropriate pastor, that every portion of the empire may be thoroughly instructed, and the whole rendered like a well watered garden, and a field which the Lord has blessed.

II. Lay Patronage must be abolished.

The State must relinquish her interference in the formation of the pastoral relation betwixt the minister and the people—and the church herself must be allowed to regulate that important measure according to her own views of the word of God. There is naturally enough of opposition in the human heart to counteract the labours of a Christian minister, without irritating and exasperating that resistance, by imposing upon a reluctant people a man for whom no person cares, and whom they all regard with aversion.

III. Education must be vigorously and perseveringly promoted.

For the soul to be without knowledge, it is not good. The Holy Ghost indeed can sanctify an infant, and plant his saving grace in the heart of the most dull, and stupid

of our race. But the Holy Ghost generally acts by means; and he has instituted the ordinances and exercises of religion as the channels through which he conveys the blessings of redeeming mercy. The more, therefore, that the mind is enlarged and invigorated by culture, it is more prepared to receive and enjoy the invaluable truths, and salutary impressions which these institutions are fitted to impart. A man of low stature, or stationed in a hollow, may have as good an eye as a giant, or a person that is placed upon an eminence. And though a child, or an illiterate man may be as pious as an apostle, yet, from the dormant state of their faculties, and the narrow range of their information, they can neither discover so fully, nor relish so exquisitely the great things of God, nor labour so effectually in the service of Christianity, as a man of a vigorous, and cultivated understanding. Without his telescope and microscope, the philosopher can see no better than other men. Put these instruments into the hands of all, and every man who is possessed of eyes, can behold the same worlds of wonder, which he himself contemplates. The telescope and microscope can inspire no love nor admiration for the Creator and Lord of all; but where devout feelings already exist, the discoveries which these instruments produce, will contribute much to expand and deepen the ideas previously entertained of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Most High. Literature and science cannot, of themselves, create religion; for many scholars and philosophers have themselves been wicked and

ungodly, and have died in a state of impenitence and unbelief. But as the glasses of the optician assist the eye, so learning is a mighty auxiliary to religion. It enables its possessor to understand far more clearly, to embrace with far more enraptured delight, and to labour with far greater efficiency in the propagation of the truths of the gospel, than his untutored companion.

In every class, those who first adopt, and most tenaciously cling to our holy faith, are the intellectual and intelligent. On the ignorant and illiterate the preaching of the word generally falls as pointless and powerless, as an address in an unknown tongue. Feeling no moral want, they have no wish to understand, and make no attempt to guess at the meaning of the message that is announced. The text and sermon, the arguments and illustrations, are all overlooked and disregarded ; because they are not only considered as useless, but found to be incomprehensible.

If ever our ministry proves successful, it is generally with the educated and reflecting. They can accompany our arguments, and comprehend our illustrations : and when their heart is gained, they become at once the brightest ornaments of piety, and the most useful members of the church, and the greatest blessings to society.

If, therefore, we desire the success of religion, and wish the doctrines of the Bible to be known by all, we must strain every nerve for the universal diffusion of education. We must never rest till every child is taught to read, and understand the Scriptures, and blessed with

that intellectual training, which at once gives him the command of his own faculties, and prepares him for understanding a process of reasoning, and obtaining an acquaintance with the objects around him. We are not to consider a child as educated, when he is merely taught to read. He may be able to peruse any volume in the language—and after all may be said to be still uneducated, unless he has been instructed to discover the truths which these publications contain, and convert them to his own improvement; and therefore, we ought never to suspend our exertions, till every individual has been imbued with a love for information, and furnished with a capacity for extracting from the volumes which he reads, the useful principles, and practical lessons which they inculcate.

IV. Sabbath schools, and classes for religious instruction.

From these institutions have proceeded many of the most accomplished and valuable members of our churches—some of our ablest ministers, and most useful missionaries: and it is to be hoped that these sacred nurseries are still rearing thousands and myriads, to be the future ornaments of the Christian name, and the instructors and benefactors of another generation. Under the superintendance of intelligent and single-hearted Christians, these institutions are eminently fitted to simplify the doctrines of Christianity, and impress the youthful heart with the importance and grandeur of the gospel. They furnish the mind of the pupil with religious knowledge. They

withdraw his attention from the secularizing tendency, and debasing influence of the cares and frivolities to which he is exposed. They break in upon the unprofitable current of his thoughts and pursuits—and are calculated to fortify him against the temptations of the world, and preposses him in favour of a life of piety and beneficence.

These institutions, therefore, claim our warmest encouragement and persevering support ; and any time and labour that we can bestow upon them, will be most amply and delightfully rewarded, if we shall always take care to have our minds deeply affected with the worth of the soul, and study so to communicate our instructions, that every lesson addressed to the understanding shall also contribute to the improvement of the heart, and the preparation of the scholar for the blessedness of eternity.

V. Village Libraries.

A telescope is of little use to a man in a dungeon ; and the art of reading is of small value to an individual who wants books. Few can furnish themselves with libraries ; but by combining, even in the poorest districts and most sequestered situations, a number of small sums will soon swell to a considerable amount ; and when they are judiciously expended, in a short time they will procure a large collection of works.

The first object in these libraries should be to provide a supply of the most practical and powerful religious publications. But there is no necessity for restricting the funds to books of that description. If we would wish

to interest and enlighten the people, we must direct them to the standard works in general literature. From the writings on the various branches of natural history and philosophy, from works in civil history and biography, and from volumes of voyages and travels, great accessions may be made to the stock of their information. And whatever is calculated to refine the taste, and enlarge the range of knowledge, is signally fitted to lead the thoughtless to reflection, and enable the pious to enjoy religion with a more keen and exquisite relish.

VI. Mechanics' institutions, and literary societies.

The object of these associations is the mutual improvement of the members, by lectures and discourses on literary and scientific subjects. These societies are subservient to the most important, and useful purposes. They diffuse much valuable information amongst those who attend them, and contribute to withdraw the mind from what is low and grovelling, and excite a taste for what is rational and sublime. Unsanctified learning, like unsanctified wealth or power, may be converted to mischief, and rendered a plague to its possessor, and a curse to society. But where learning is based upon revelation, it is at once an ornament to its possessor, and a prodigious blessing to the world. While it extends the field of his contemplation, and expands and matures his powers, it elevates his own condition, and qualifies him for the more efficient discharge of the different duties of his station.

Wherever these associations have been established, the

results have been most animating and beneficial. The members have found their partiality for useful pursuits strengthened and confirmed. Their greater intelligence has raised them above their brethren—furnished them with a source of additional enjoyment—rendered them greater treasures to their families and companions, and predisposed them for receiving the truths, and fitted them for pleading the cause of religion.

Let all, then, who love the improvement of our country, and long for the progress of religion, lend their aid to patronize these powerful auxiliaries to the great cause to which they are devoted. Every department of creation is teeming with displays of the infinite perfections of the Creator. But while they are overlooked or unknown, men are deprived of all the devout impressions, and salutary lessons which they are calculated to impart. The more widely you spread the knowledge of his works and dispensations, you do the greater justice to the character of the Most High, by enabling a greater number of our race to contemplate his adorable excellencies. Every accession to the knowledge of a man, helps to weaken the force of vicious and degrading habits; and therefore, if you wish to diminish the prevalence of crime and misery, and augment the measure of human virtue and enjoyment, assist in forwarding these plans for the amelioration of our brethren. An acquaintance with the works and ways of Providence, has often been found a mean of putting men in possession of the holiness and comforts of the gospel; and therefore, if you would wish

to bring them under the power of the truth, and bless them with the glorious liberty of the sons of God—labour to advance their knowledge of his character, as that is unfolded in the productions of his hands.

You need not fear that you shall carry education to excess. As long as religion lies at the foundation of their acquisitions, and is employed to guide their researches, and direct the application of their attainments—though every peasant, and every mechanic, were possessed of the erudition of Porson, or the science of Watt, these never could hurt their personal happiness, nor injure the peace and prosperity of the public. The general prevalence of such accomplishments would ennoble the character of the individuals, and prodigiously augment the sum of their felicity. Mind would predominate over matter; passion would yield to reason; low and brutal pleasures would be exchanged for those which are lofty and sublime; and the time and the talents of our brethren would be sedulously and unreservedly consecrated to secure the great ends of rational existence. And is there any thing in such a result to inspire the politician or philanthropist with alarm? Though we could fill our farm-houses, our work-shops, and factories, with men endowed with the mental grasp and mighty intelligence of angels, what could society apprehend from their presence, as long as their knowledge is seasoned and sancified with the principles of the gospel—and while, day after day, they are exhibiting the generosity and purity, and aspiring at the devotion and benevolence of seraphs?

VII. The suppression of intemperance.

Dissipation is a complete extinguisher to all that is religious and rational. It is utterly inconsistent with the existence of piety in the heart—and it very soon proves fatal to the cultivation of every thing that is liberal and intellectual. If it finds its victim in a state of ignorance and poverty, it infallibly keeps him in that low and degrading condition, and defeats all his attempts to rise; and if it seize him when in more elevated and favourable circumstances, it uniformly strips him of his respectability and comfort, and reduces him to a state of degradation. It is in vain to cover the country with schools, libraries, and mechanics' institutions, while we allow the demon of intemperance to walk at large. This horrid monster will undo all our humane and benevolent efforts for the improvement of our brethren; and in spite of every exertion to enlighten and refine them, will retain them in a state of abject and overwhelming wretchedness.

If, therefore, you would wish to give effect to the other measures employed for the reformation of the age, you must resolutely set your face against every form of intemperance. By your example, your counsel, and by calling in the aid of the legislature, you must labour to emancipate our country from the debasing and ruinous influence of this enormous evil. It is a vice with which we must not trifle. It is too insidious and fascinating to be allowed the smallest indulgence. Nothing can insure our safety, but total extirpation.

VIII. The preaching of the gospel.

This is the great ordinance which God has especially appointed, and most signally blessed for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints. "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified ; unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness : but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

There is something very much calculated to rouse the attention, and lead to serious reflection, when a minister, deeply impressed with the value of souls, and the importance of his subject, stands up in the midst of an assembly, and, like an ambassador from God, addresses his hearers with affection and earnestness, on the truths of religion, and the overpowering realities of eternity. There is something in his own manifest sincerity, and in the intensity of his feelings, fitted to bespeak the favourable regard of the hearer, and command his serious consideration. The reverence and interest likewise of those around him, contribute to solemnize the mind of the auditor, and rivet his thoughts to what creates such general and deep solicitude.

But while there is a natural tendency in the serious and powerful preaching of the word to bespeak attention, and make its way to the understanding and the heart—it

is an institution which enjoys the promise of God's special blessing, and which he has honoured with the most signal success. While ministers are enjoined to preach the word, and to be instant in season and out of season Jesus has engaged to be with them always, even unto the end of the world, and declared that his word shall not return to him empty nor void. And if we inquire what has been the great instrument in past ages in turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? we know that this has been the preaching of the gospel. This has been the principal mean of overturning the delusions and abominations of idolatry and vice, and of subduing nations to the obedience of the faith.

And if we would wish to see a revival of Christianity in our land, and our country filled with the life and power of piety, we must promote the preaching of the word. The number and labours of ministers must be multiplied. Provision must be made for all to enjoy access to the house of God, and every method taken to induce the rich and the poor to listen to the joyful sounds of redeeming mercy. Ministers must be diligent in fulfilling this part of their office; and when they preach, they must be careful to preach Christ, and him crucified.

It is only the preaching of the gospel, or the great truths connected with our redemption through Christ, that God has promised to bless and prosper. It is often necessary for ministers to address their audience on other topics than our natural depravity, and our recovery by the work of Immanuel, and the agency of the Holy Ghost.

We must enforce their personal and social obligations. We must guard them against popular errors, and predominant vices, and direct their attention to the aspect of Providence, and warn them of approaching dangers. In these, and in a thousand similar cases, Christ and his apostles have given us an example of the necessity of watching the signs of the times, and applying the general principles of Christianity to the particular emergencies that occur. But in such situations, Christ and his apostles have given us an admirable pattern of affection and simplicity, of zeal for the Divine glory, and compassion for souls. And if we would wish to enjoy the approbation of God, and witness the success of our labours, we must imitate their example, and cultivate their spirit.

But to dwell on Greek or Hebrew criticism, before men who can scarcely read their native language—to expatiate on topics of mental or of natural science, in the presence of men who have never spent a thought upon the figure of the earth, or the nature of their souls,—this is neither to divide the word of truth, nor feed the flocks committed to our charge. To preach the leading and essential truths of the gospel, but to announce them with that degree of hesitation and embarrassment, of tameness and frigidity, as would lead strangers to suppose that we considered them either as false or frivolous, or had heard of them for the first time only on our way to the house of God: is this the proper method to commend ourselves to the conscience of every man, and persuade them to renounce all for the sake of Jesus? When we preach

the gospel, but clothe our discourses in such an elaborate and metaphysical garb as to render them unintelligible to the one-half of our hearers, and uninteresting to the other, can we be said to have renounced the excellency of speech and of wisdom, and to be constrained by the love of Christ to glory in his cross? Such men may be brimful of logic and learning ; but instead of employing it to illumine and enliven their sermons, they use them merely to darken their address, and defeat the practical effect of their discourse. To improve the colour or flavour of his prescription, the physician may give it a dash of an aromatic, or an acid ; but he relies for its efficacy on the essence, or the salt which it contains. To secure attention, and prepossess their hearers in behalf of the instructions which they deliver, ministers may throw around their statements and appeals the beauties of an easy and an eloquent diction, and adorn them with pointed and forcible illustrations ; but, under God, they must trust for their success to the eloquence of a warm heart, and a holy life, and the copious infusion of gospel truth which they pour into all their exhortations and discussions. They never can acquire too great a command of the treasures of philosophy and literature. They never can bring too mighty and gigantic powers to the service of the gospel. Though they were blessed with all the capacities, and all the knowledge of the inhabitants of heaven, they would find ample occasion for the whole in their momentous work. But if they are men of God, and know what they are doing, they will consecrate all

their talents and attainments to the honour of their adorable Redeemer ; and live, and preach, and pray, like men who feel that their own souls are at stake, and who believe that the highest glory of a mortal is to shrink into insignificance, that Christ may be all in all.

IX. Parochial missions.

If churches and ministers were sufficiently multiplied, there would be no occasion for the assistance of parish missionaries. The clergyman would be able, in his own person, to superintend the whole of his locality, and perform every spiritual function to all its inhabitants. But in the present overgrown state of our parishes, it is physically impossible for the ministers to watch over the whole residents within the limits assigned them, and to bring the message of salvation home to every individual.

From a variety of causes, many are unable to pay for sittings in the house of God, or to provide the raiment in which they would like to appear in a place of worship. And some who could easily attend, are utterly unwilling. Their innate dislike to religion, has been fastened and confirmed by a neglected or vicious education, by the example and counsels of graceless associates, or by habits of intemperance and profligacy. The longer that they live, their antipathy to all that is sacred and serious becomes the more strong and resolute. Such men will not go abroad in quest of the food necessary for their souls. We must bring it near them—place it before them—and press it on them. They may spurn our best services, and reject our most humane and beneficent

labours. But these private attentions, and unobtrusive acts of kindness, afford almost the only hope of their salvation. By watching opportunities when the heart is softened by sickness, or awed into seriousness by some of the numerous troubles and trials of life, we may lead him to serious consideration, and succeed in bringing him to the knowledge of the Saviour. But if these unassuming efforts fail, there is little ground for hope — and we have too much reason to dread his everlasting perdition.

In this important work, the labours of parochial missionaries are invaluable. To those who are unable or unwilling to repair to the Fountain of Life, they direct its salutary stream to their habitation. To those who refuse to step out to gather a portion of the spiritual manna, they offer a portion of the heavenly bread, and invite them to eat it in their tents.

The ministrations of this useful class of men, are not intended to rival or supersede the services of the regular pastor, but only to enlarge and supplement them. The pastor is multiplied in the persons of the missionaries; and while he is occupied with other parts of his duty, they compensate for his absence, and carry forward the great objects of his office. By bearing the message of reconciliation round the different dwellings in their districts, and reasoning from day to day with their inmates; they excite inquiry, induce them to reflect, and make ready a people for the more public and solemn ministrations of the gospel.

These laudable agents have already contributed much to the cause of Christianity. They have reclaimed many tracts from the wastes of the world. Besides aiding to fill the sanctuaries which previously existed, they have occasioned the erection of several additional edifices to the worship of God: and their usefulness will undoubtedly extend in proportion as their numbers increase; till the wilderness of our Zion is made like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. And, therefore, if we would wish to behold such a desirable consummation, let us give them every encouragement and aid.

X. Eminent individual piety.

Every human creature is bound to become a Christian; and we are not at liberty to desist from our benevolent labours for the welfare of our brethren, till each is subdued to the authority of the Son of God, and made a Christian in deed and in truth.

And what is meant by a Christian? When may we regard our generous toils complete? Is a Christian a man who adopts a few speculative tenets different from those entertained by his brethren, while his spirit and temper are the same? Is he a man who attends on religious ordinances and exercises, while he walks according to the course of the world, and retains the bad passions, and selfish principles of the men who are openly and avowedly living without God, and without Christ?

Many professors have no other idea of religion. They have a name to live, while they are dead. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him,—being

abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Such men in every age have been the plague of the church, and the disgrace of the Christian name. They have brought a reproach on our holy calling, and sadly retarded the progress of the gospel.

A Christian is a man who complies with the spirit and design of redeeming mercy. He understands the nature, and believes the reality of the gospel. Finding that he has no righteousness of his own, and assured that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believes, he relies on him for righteousness and strength. Whilst he is delighted and transported with the matchless goodness, and the unsearchable grace of God in the gift of his Son; love and gratitude constrain him to live not to himself, but to him who died for him, and rose again. Regarding himself as not his own, but as bought with a price, he strives to glorify God in his body and spirit, which are his. He is a new creature. His conversation is in heaven. His heart is set on the things that are above; and he rejoices to spend and be spent in works of piety and beneficence.

Such is the life which the Christian maintains. Such is the life which you must cultivate; if you would wish either to prove to your own heart, or demonstrate to the world that you are the disciples of Christ. And such is the life which you must live; if you would wish to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and raise the gospel in the esteem, and recommend it to the hearts of the unregenerate.

Many of the unregenerate are sober, decent, and respectable. They are just, honest, kind, and beneficent.

Now, if you allow them to surpass you in any branch of virtue, how can you either persuade yourselves that you are Christians, or gain them over to the faith of the gospel? If you would wish either to possess good hope through grace, or attract them to the fellowship of Christ, you must give them a bright and consistent example of the purifying and transforming power of the truth. You must not think it enough to be moderately good, or to exhibit an average amount of generosity and kindness. You must be eminently pious, and foremost in every humane and laudable undertaking. In the things in which the worldly excel, you must be immeasurably above them, and furnish them with a specimen of virtues and graces, of which they otherwise could have had no conception. In whatever rank of society you are placed, and whatever relations of life you occupy, endeavour to fulfil all their duties with a fidelity and affection becoming the disciples of Him who went about doing good. If you are at the head of a family—by the regularity and earnestness with which you conduct domestic devotion—let others see, that whatever they do, you and your houses will serve the Lord. If parents; never desist from your kind and holy exertions, till Christ is formed in your children, the hope of glory. As husbands or wives, masters or servants, magistrates or subjects; let your whole deportment show, that your supreme desire is, that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus,

and the welfare of your brethren promoted in time, and their salvation secured through eternity.

By thus exhibiting a high elevation above the world, and an untiring diligence and zeal in the discharge of every social duty—by displaying a meekness which no injuries can provoke, and a fortitude which no difficulties nor dangers can subdue nor shake—by manifesting a benevolence which knows no bounds, and a devotedness to the service of God and of man, which becomes the more fervent and intense, the more winning and graceful, in proportion as it is abused and vilified: by such a conduct as this you will sustain the honour of our sacred religion; and if you cannot gain the hearts of its adversaries, you will disarm their hostility, or at least frustrate their attempts for its hurt.

XI. United and persevering private exertion.

While we are required to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are enjoined to express our kindness by doing good to all, as we have opportunity.

Are you solitary and alone in a neighbourhood? Let not that circumstance discourage you. Though in a field of weeds, a rose and a lily not only retain their beauty, but continue to emit their fragrance. And even though single-handed, you are neither to bow to the pressure of prevailing depravity, nor relax your efforts for the conversion of your brethren. While you give to all a shining pattern of piety; explain and recommend religion by your conversation, and seize on every fit occa-

sion to make known the riches of redeeming love, and rescue your companions from the snares of Satan.

You may fear that you are able to accomplish little. But remember that you are not answerable for consequences. Our duty is to attend to what God has commanded. Great effects have been produced by humble, and apparently feeble agents. And whenever they shall be attempted in faith and in earnest, we have reason to expect the most grand and delightful results. Are we not told, that "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass? and that a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation?"

But if you can find a companion who already knows and loves the gospel, take him to your heart. Make him your associate in all your pious and humane undertakings. Two are better than one. They afford each other encouragement and support. The one confirms and deepens the impressions which the other produces; and, when former contrivances have failed, he may discover some new plan of beneficence, which would have escaped his coadjutor.

Spend weekly a portion of your time in reading the Scriptures together, in prayer, and in consultation about the most efficient means of promoting the growth of grace in your own hearts, and of extending the influence of religion in your vicinity.

Let every two or more, who are united in the faith

and hope of the gospel, select a small district for the field of your operations, and cultivate it with assiduity and affection, till you see a blessing on your labours. Some defeat their benevolent exertions by undertaking too large a locality. A better crop will be raised from a handful of corn sown on a well cultivated spot, than from a bushel thrown at random on an undressed acre. And in your attempts to evangelize your neighbourhood, you will secure far more grand and cheering results by confining your care to a few individuals and families, than by frittering away your energies on a vast and unmanageable multitude.

If possible, pay a weekly visit to each of the few families to whom you more especially devote your Christian attentions. In all your intercourse with them, keep the grand and ultimate object of your kindness continually in view; and never relinquish your beneficent exertions, till you have persuaded them to renounce every thing for the favour of God in Christ. Recommend to them useful publications, and when you are able, lend to them pious and awakening books. Urge them to attend a practical and searching ministry. Press them to establish family worship, and to take care of the religious education of their children. Embrace every opportunity for introducing serious conversation, and talking with them affectionately and pointedly on the state of their souls and their prospects for eternity.

If by the blessing of God you succeed in bringing any under the power of the truth, let the same process

be repeated. Let the converts subdivide; and fix on small but adjoining localities; and pursue their benevolent efforts among its occupants, till they gain more and more to the obedience of the faith. By this subdivision of labour, and multiplication of labourers, there is reason to expect, that the sacred cause will advance, till the workmen of one district meet the generous deeds of those of another; till our country be covered with the blessed fruits of their toil, every family leavened with the principles of piety, and the whole world ultimately converted into the kingdom of Christ.

You must pass by no family nor individual. It is a gross delusion to imagine that your benevolent task is complete before every family and every individual is thoroughly instructed in the knowledge of the gospel, and blessed with the possession of its saving power. If we are satisfied with a general profession of religion in a district, without taking care that all the inhabitants in detail understand the gospel, and feel the influence of things divine; we shall involve ourselves in the most awful and deplorable consequences. We are chargeable with gross cruelty towards those whom we overlook, and, for our omission we must answer at the judgment-seat of Christ. Those whom we neglect may acquire strength and numbers; and, in the course of time, paralyse or overturn all our praiseworthy, but partial undertakings. Our work never can be complete, and we never can be warranted to consider the interests of religion as safe, till piety become universal. Till then, one root of bitter-

ness after another, will be perpetually springing up and troubling us: and therefore we never for a moment must forget the necessity of employing every suitable measure to render Christianity the possession of every individual, and to insure its permanency in our country, and its prevalence over all the earth.

XII. Patronise and support undertakings to propagate the gospel among foreign nations.

All souls are God's, and every soul is precious. The philanthropy of the apostles was unbounded. Whatever partiality they entertained for their countrymen, they considered themselves as debtors to the Greeks and the Barbarians, to the wise and the unwise, so that they were ready to preach the gospel to men of every nation and complexion. Those ministers and laymen who were most successful in their endeavours to promote the spiritual welfare of their brethren at home, have always been the most active and persevering in their endeavours to send the gospel abroad. Their compassion for the heathen gave greater intensity to their solicitude for the conversion of those who were near them, and led them to abound more in prayer and labour for their everlasting welfare, and the Lord sealed his approbation of their generosity, by pouring out his blessing upon their exertions.

Without any sympathy for the heathen, we may be formal, regular, and exemplary in our attentions to the people by whom we are encompassed. But if we shut up our bowels of compassion from any of our perishing

brethren, and withhold our assistance from the attempts to rescue the most remote inhabitants of the earth from the dominion of the prince of darkness: how can we persuade ourselves that we have any genuine concern for souls at all? What motive can bind us to be active and persevering in our home employments? and on what ground can we expect the benediction of heaven upon our partial and inconsistent efforts?

If therefore you would wish to demonstrate your sincerity, to invigorate your zeal and ardour, and to have your work crowned by the approbation of the Lord: let your love be without restraint, and be always ready to co-operate in every religious and beneficent undertaking. I shall merely add—

XIII. Fervent and persevering prayer.

It is difficult to reclaim men from habits of impiety and vice, and induce them to adopt a virtuous conduct, and make a profession of religion. But this may be accomplished, without bringing them one inch nearer the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisees and Sadducees, and many Mahometans and heathen, have been decent, sober, and virtuous. But who would say that they were the children of God, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? And at the present day, we find people who frequent church, attend ordinances, and go through the round of outward observances; who would recoil at the idea of opening their hearts to the gospel, of renouncing all for the Lord Jesus Christ, of resting entirely on his righteousness, and living wholly to the praise of

his glory. But, till this is secured, we have gained nothing. The same mountains of separation lie betwixt them and salvation, as when they never had given the subject a moment's consideration. If he never get up, what does it signify how often the sluggard shall turn himself upon his bed? And what avail all the reforms and changes which a natural man can undergo, if he never relinquish his carnality, nor cordially embrace the provisions of the gospel?

To secure this important, indispensable object, is far beyond the reach of human agency. Gehazi could carry the staff, and lay it on the face of the child; but he could not recall his spirit and his breath. Elijah could prepare the altar and the wood; but he could not create the fire to light the saturated pile, and consume the sacrifice. And after we have exerted every faculty, and laid every measure under requisition, if destitute of supernatural aid, we must return with the complaint—Who hath believed our report? We have laboured, and been in pain; but we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

He has all power in heaven and in earth. He can create a people at once, and make a nation be born in a day. If he undertake our cause, and smile on our efforts; our work is easy, and our success infallible. Remember what he did at Pentecost, and by the agency of Paul. Meditate on the displays of his converting

and saving power, by the ministrations of Luther and Knox, Welsh and Livingstone, Gray and Whitefield.

And is his hand shortened that it cannot save? or his ear heavy that it cannot hear? He is for ever the same: and the past manifestations of his saving might, are mere specimens of the wonder-working energies of his soul-subduing grace. He has promised his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. He has declared that the Gentiles shall come to him from the ends of the earth, saying, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." He has assured us that the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved. And has he said it, and will he not do it? Has he spoken it, and will he not bring it to pass?

He remembers his word, and is faithful to his engagements. But he expects that the interposition of his saving grace shall be implored by fervent, persevering prayer. What he has purposed in mercy, and his Son has purchased by his merits, must be won from him by the supplications, and intercessions of his people. If we will address him in the confidence of faith, and in the urgency of importunity, he will delight and astonish us with the communications of his sanctifying and saving power. He will open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. So far from husbanding his resources, and imparting them cautiously and sparingly, he rejoices to

bestow them freely and copiously. For unless this is the case, why does he court our supplications, invite our petitions, and seem desirous to be relieved of his invaluable treasures? Why does he tell us that we have not because we ask not—and why does he add, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me?

He places the key of his stores in our hands, and makes us welcome to the enjoyment of all that we choose to solicit. If, therefore, religion languishes, and the church is limited in her extent, this arises from no defect in his resources, nor from any want of liberality and love, but from the coldness, the rarity, and frigidity of our prayers. Enlarged, fervent, united, persevering prayer is irresistible. It possesses power with God, and insures the presence and blessing of Omnipotence.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTIVES FOR INCREASED RELIGIOUS EXERTION.

IN order to stimulate you who have really embraced the gospel to labour earnestly and perseveringly to extend it, I might appeal to your hopes and fears, to your past condition, and your present state, your privileges and prospects, all that is commanding in the discoveries of revelation, and sublime and transporting in the enjoyment of the great salvation. I shall, however, merely entreat you to remember, that to labour for the advancement of the cause of Christ, is—

I. The most exalted and noble work in which you can be employed.

If no height can be higher than the heavens, nor any expanse longer than immensity; can any being be more exalted than the Most High, or possessed of greater authority and power than the Almighty? God could easily transport you to another planet, and place provinces of space under your control; but though he should invest you with the wealth of worlds, and give you the command of suns and systems, could he ever raise you to a higher honour than to be his servants, or call you to a

more elevated and glorious task, than to be occupied with his work? His service constitutes the distinction of angels, and is the most valuable privilege within the reach of the loftiest in creation.

Now, the propagation of the gospel in the world is pre-eminently the work of God. Christ, and the blessings of his salvation, are the gift of God. Redemption, in all its parts, is his own work: and his agency is as necessary and indispensable for the introduction and extension of this dispensation of benignity and love, as in the formation and preservation of the earth and heavens. We had destroyed ourselves; but in him was our help. We were lost; and he sent his own Son to seek and save us. We had sold ourselves for nought; and he redeemed us without money and without price.

And when redemption is wholly his work: every prayer for the advancement of Christianity, every farthing contributed to the funds of pious beneficence, every sentence spoken in love and in earnest for the spiritual benefit of your brethren, and every affectionate exertion and suffering for the defence and enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom; is a service rendered to the Lord, and a tribute of your duty and gratitude to the King of Kings.

And when this is the case; and when life is so short and uncertain, when eternity is so near, and we shall so soon be present with the Lord: can we have a just respect for his authority, or a suitable regard for what is most lofty and magnificent in moral conduct; and yet refuse or hesitate to embark in his work, and do what we can for

the honour of his blessed and adorable name. This work is—

II. The most grateful and acceptable to God.

The production and support of worlds occasioned no expense nor difficulty to Deity. He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and they stood fast. To create additional suns and systems, he has merely to issue his mandate, and they would immediately appear. But the redemption of our race was painful and expensive. It was such as Deity never had undertaken, and such as he never will repeat. It required the sufferings and death of the second Person in the adorable Godhead.

And was this a simple and easy task? Watch the conduct, and mark the feelings of Immanuel, and say, if the deliverance of our apostate species from wretchedness and ruin was a slight and gentle enterprize? Was it easy for Him whom all nature reveres, and all the angels adore, to be despised and rejected of men, and stretch out his hands when no man regarded him? Was it easy for Him, who wields creation at pleasure, and enjoys the unchanging, unbounded delight of the Father; to endure the contradiction of sinners, and be subjected to their rancour and contumely? Was it easy for Him, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, and whose soul was yearning for our eternal welfare; to be grieved for our insensibility and impenitence, and to have his heart melted like wax in the midst of his bowels? Listen to his strong crying and tears; look at his bitter agony and bloody sweat; attend to his inquiry, Is it nothing to you, all ye

that pass by, behold and see, if ever there was sorrow like unto my sorrow ; hear him crying, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? and say, if he found the redemption of our rebellious world an easy task ?

Jesus was the sufferer. But were the Father and the Spirit unaffected by his pangs and sorrows ? If, in our distress, we enjoy the divine compassion—if Jesus is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and in all our affliction is afflicted—how much more must he have possessed the sympathy of the Father, and the Eternal Spirit ? If, when one member of the body suffers, all the members suffer with it ; or, if when one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it : when all the persons of the Trinity are so inseparably and eternally united, that the Father and the Son dwell in each other, and Jesus could say, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, how must the Father and the Holy Ghost have shared in the anguish of Christ, and sympathised in his sufferings ?

Now, has the redemption of the soul been an object of such intense and lasting interest to all the persons of the Godhead ; and is there any measure by which we can more directly and fully comply with the Divine will, than by advancing the kingdom of the Redeemer ?

In the formation and government of worlds, God acts independently and alone. He has little value for the exercise of physical strength, and has no recourse to created agency, and makes no application for human aid. But redemption is an everlasting monument of his esteem,

of holy benevolence ; and while he is desirous that all should enjoy the riches of his grace, he is solicitous that every believer should resemble him in his kindness, and cultivate a strong and generous compassion for the holiness and happiness of the children of men. Hence, his demands on our concurrence and co-operation in the maintenance of religion, and in its diffusion through the world. Hence his urgency and importunity that we should watch for souls, do good, and communicate, and be fellow-workers with himself in carrying forward the purposes of his reconciling love, and in filling the earth with the blessings of salvation. What an honour and privilege is this ! In heaven, through eternity, you shall have constant and delightful employment ; but in all the realms of bliss no work can be so ennobling and transporting as that of reclaiming rebels to the allegiance which they owe the God of love—rescuing sinners from destruction, and guiding their feet into the way of peace and safety.

The conversion of sinners is a subject of rejoicing to the Father, who spared not his Son that we might have redemption through his blood. The salvation of sinners is the reward and recompense which Immanuel sought when he made his soul an offering for sin ; and if sinners flock to him as clouds, and as doves to their windows ; he is satisfied for all his unknown and matchless woes.

And can you prefer Jesus to your chief joy, and count all but loss for his sake ; and yet withhold your assistance from a cause in which he is so deeply interested, and for

the attainment of which, he has undergone such unparalleled sufferings? Think of the encomiums which he has pronounced, and the blessings which he has bestowed on those who were faithful and diligent in his cause; and the nations and kingdoms which he has utterly wasted, for opposing and persecuting his people; and the tremendous load of indignation and wrath which he has reserved for the indolent and slothful in his service, and those who have opposed or counteracted his work; and if you either dread his displeasure, or long for his approbation and blessing, devote yourselves sincerely and unreservedly to the promotion of that object which he regards so tenderly, and on the attainment of which he is so strongly and intently set. This work is—

III. The most agreeable and pleasing to the angels of light.

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. We have some idea of the wretchedness of a lost soul, and of the dignity and felicity of a ransomed sinner; but we cannot fully understand these matters. The angels, perhaps, cannot completely comprehend them. For who knows the power of God's anger? or who can tell the amount of the felicity and glory prepared for them that love him? But the angels have more enlarged and adequate views than we, of their extent and grandeur. They know better than we the warmth and tenderness of the love of Christ. They see more than we of his infinite majesty and unsearchable excellencies, and, therefore, they feel a more

lively interest in the conversion of a sinner that repents.

And when these pure spirits, who belong to a different order of creatures, and have no connection with our species; when they have never suffered by our fall, and can derive no personal benefit from our salvation; are so alive to our welfare, and so delighted at the conversion of sinners; when the inhabitants of earth are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and we are linked to them by so many strong and tender ties; shall we overlook their misery, and disregard their fate?

If these angels were on earth, if they occupied our places, and possessed as easy access as we to our brethren, how would they act? Would they conceal their religion? place a bushel over their light? tell us that they had enough to do with themselves? that they were not our keepers? and that since each had a deeper interest in the subject, they might either attend to their own salvation, or take the consequences? No. They would be instant in season and out of season to rouse and reclaim the careless and secure. They would be perpetually abounding in acts of beneficence and mercy, and would spend and be spent for their salvation. And when you are bound to society by so numerous and endearing attachments; when every individual on the surface of the earth is a brother; when you are living in the midst of your father's family, or see your own family rising around you; can you know the grace of Christ, or possess any portion of the mind which was in him; and

yet neglect opportunities for advancing his cause, and diffusing the blessings of his salvation among all the guilty and helpless wanderers of our race. This work is—

IV. The most important and beneficial to man.

We regard those men as benefactors to society, who increase the employment, raise the wages, and multiply the comforts of the poor; who furnish asylums for the blind, the deaf, the maimed, and the sick; who provide for the instruction of the ignorant, the relief of the destitute, and the spread of the mild and animating influence of health and happiness, peace and harmony, through all the families of a land.

By whatever means these objects could be secured, if they were accomplished, they would possess a great importance and value, and every friend to humanity would cheerfully admit all their real and legitimate worth. But such ends never have been, and apparently never can be attained without the gospel. A few irreligious men have proved humane and generous; and have spent their time, and devoted their fortune to the benefit of society, and the improvement of their brethren. But the great majority of worldly men are avaricious and selfish; and in order to gratify their passions, and aggrandize their fortunes, are willing to sacrifice the claims of charity and kindness; spread vice and misery through their vicinity, and replenish their country with crime and wretchedness. Their course can generally be easily traced by the moral ravages which they have perpetrated, and the dreary wastes which they have left behind them. The men of

former generations, who astonish us by the splendid monuments which they have left of their wealth and philanthropy, in the greater number of cases, were men of piety; and, in our own day, the men who, like ministering angels, are unweariedly labouring to enlighten and bless the indigent and neglected classes of society; belong to the household of faith. Love to God, and gratitude to Jesus, compel them to attempt and endure all things for the sake of their suffering brethren. To the graceless is reserved the task of reviling their persons and proceedings, and counteracting and undoing their generous and godlike undertakings.

And, while we have no reason to hope that any, except men of piety, will seriously attempt the temporal improvement of society; we must remember that, even were the wishes of secular patriots and philanthropists completely gratified, and all our families reduced to sobriety and decorum, and blessed with prosperity and affluence, these advantages dwindle down into insignificance, when compared with the excellence and grandeur of the gospel. Nothing less than the grace of God can change the heart, subdue the wayward and perverse dispositions of our nature, and give salvation, with eternal glory, to the soul. Under the blush of health, the seeds of mortality are as really springing up, and acquiring maturity, as when stretched on the bed of languishing, and wasting away with pining illness; and amidst all the decencies and proprieties of a sober and virtuous deportment, the heart may be as far from God, and ripening

as fast for destruction, as when the life is marked by atrocity, and disgraced with all that is abominable and vile. At the very utmost, the ameliorations wrought apart from genuine religion, are limited in their extent, and temporary in their duration. They are confined to the body, and vanish with the breath of life.

But, give a man the gospel, and what is the consequence? You give him all that he can desire or need for time or for eternity. You introduce light into his understanding, and holiness and happiness into his heart. You remove the crimes and passions that degrade and undo him; and plant in his soul those graces and virtues which ennoble and bless him. You still the disorders and tumults of a troubled conscience; and establish serenity and peace within his spirit. You raise him above indigence and want; and enrich him with invaluable and imperishable treasures. You rescue him from condemnation and wrath; and make him an object of mercy and Divine protection and kindness. You introduce him into the household of faith, link his weakness to omnipotence, and serve him heir to the felicity of heaven, and all the liberality and goodness of the Most High. On earth, the Divine presence and love surround him. In the midst of weakness, he is strong. Though poor, he possesses all things. Under the pressure of disease and trouble, of persecution and annoyance, he possesses a peace that passes all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And when life leaves him, he has an abundant entrance administered into the everlasting

kingdom of his Lord. There he rests from his labours. There he is made exceeding glad in the presence of God. The Lord shows him the path of life; in his presence is fulness of joy; at his right hand are pleasures evermore.

Is this the consequence of converting a sinner from the error of his ways? Do you preserve his soul from death, and encompass him with all the blessings of redeeming mercy, in time and through eternity? And will you hesitate to embark in the work? When the Jewish camp was perishing by the stings of the fiery flying serpents; would you have rejoiced to have been honoured to fashion the serpent of brass, when aware of the miraculous virtue with which God would endow it? And when the gospel accomplishes infinitely more than this instrument could perform; will you decline or hesitate to make its invaluable blessings universally known, and every where felt.

Do you regard the gospel as the best gift of God to man? as the most peerless display of divine benignity and grace? as eclipsing all the other proofs of the wisdom, compassion, the generosity and benignity of our God? And will you still act coldly and tamely in its diffusion?

V. This is the most useful work in which you can engage for society.

We would rejoice if wars were for ever prevented; animosity and turbulence eradicated; vice and crime abolished; and all that darkens the prospects, and troubles the state of society, for ever removed.

But whence come all the wars, the divisions, conten-

tions, vices, and crimes, which embitter the state, and agitate the minds of mortals? From ignorance of the gospel, or enmity to its influence. From the moment that religion takes possession of the heart, the man loves God supremely, and his neighbour as himself. He does good to all as he has opportunity. Accordingly, we are told, that when the gospel shall become universal, the crimes and calamities which have darkened and distressed the nations will disappear. There will be nothing to hurt or destroy, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

It is the most profitable work for your own soul.

The annals of religious philanthropy furnish a most beautiful and striking commentary upon the truth of the declaration, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty: the liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

In order to advance the growth of personal piety, do you admit that it is of great importance to be deeply impressed with the worth of the soul, and the value of the great salvation? to have our minds familiarized with revealed truth, and our hearts affected with the magnitude and grandeur of things divine? to be frequent and fervent in prayer, and much occupied and engrossed with those employments and pursuits which bring us near to God, and to which he has promised his special approbation and blessing? If you acknowledge the usefulness of these things in furthering your own spiritual interests—

then devote yourselves unweariedly to insure the salvation of others; for this is a most excellent measure for invigorating the life of religion in your own souls.

I. The effort to convert others, is calculated to impress your own minds with a deeper sense of the worth of the soul, and the value of the great salvation.

It is principally because the unconverted have no just idea of the value of their souls, that they live in habits of such religious indolence and apathy, and in practices of such open and gross criminality. If they would seriously reflect on the immortality of their souls, and the immensity of the happiness and misery of which they are susceptible—it would be scarcely possible for the whole graceless men on earth, and all the devils in hell, to retain them another day in a state of security and carnality, and urge them on to another deed of darkness and impiety. Rather than again blaspheme the blessed name of God, rather than profane another Sabbath, indulge in another fit of debauchery, and give way to another burst of violence and fury—they would submit to be torn limb from limb, and subjected to the most bloody and appalling death.

But the more frequently and profoundly we meditate upon the worth of the soul, we become the more alive to the excellence and grandeur of things spiritual and eternal, and the more solicitous to insure the joys of a happy and triumphant immortality. Every renewed attempt to draw the attention of others to their everlasting felicity, is fitted to rivet and deepen the conviction

of the transcendent worth, and ineffable importance of our own salvation. While we are recommending piety to them, we are necessarily reminded of our own interest in the subject, and the necessity of giving diligence to make our own calling and election sure. The salutary inquiry is perpetually recurring,—If others shall perish who neither know God, nor obey the gospel of his Son—how shall we, who are toiling and praying for their conversion, escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Hirelings, who for a piece of bread intrude into the sacred office, may neither care for their own souls nor the souls of others. But every individual who takes a strong and tender interest in the propagation of the gospel—the more that he strives and pleads and contributes for the extension of the cause of Christ, must acquire a higher elevation of mind, and a greater amount of spiritual prosperity. By such scattering he increases; and while watering others he is unexpectedly watered himself. The sacred fuel which he employs for his neighbour's benefit augments his own warmth; and the food which he provides for the entertainment of his friends furnishes himself with refreshment and strength. Unless this expansive beneficence possesses a compensating and an accumulating power: why are the most successful ministers, and the most generous religious philanthropists, always the most distinguished for their personal piety, and honoured with the greatest share of spiritual prosperity?

But, if he who thus scatters increases; it is also found that he who withholds more than is meet tends to

poverty. By neglecting the souls of others, he is gradually betrayed into trifling with his own. Reluctant to exert his talents, or employ his substance for the benefit of his brethren at home or abroad—he insensibly begins to idolize his wealth, and omit the improvement of his religious privileges. His religion gradually declines. His zeal and vigilance abate. Indolence and carnality more rapidly or slowly recover their ascendancy, till at last he sinks into complete conformity to the world. Whether clergymen or laymen, those who are most careless about the conversion of others are invariably the greatest strangers to the consolations of the gospel, and most destitute of any form and appearance of vital godliness.

* * * * *

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE EXTENT OF THE GOSPEL CALL.

EXODUS xx. 3.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

THE whole of redemption is calculated alike to manifest the riches of divine wisdom and love, and promote the dignity and felicity of man. By nothing is this dispensation of mercy more deeply endeared to the heart of the faithful, nor rendered more characteristic of its adorable Author, than by the magnitude and grandeur of the blessings which it confers, and the liberality and freeness with which they are bestowed. In themselves these blessings are the most sublime and precious which God can bestow, or the heart of a creature can receive: and they are given with a kindness and cordiality which bring them down to the level of every human creature, and render them accessible to the most helpless and worthless of our race. The radical and leading blessing in this conveyance of mercy is nothing less than the gift of the infinite and all-sufficient Jehovah to be our God

and portion: and this ineffable, inconceivable blessing, so far from being confined to a few, and placed beyond the reach of the great mass of men, is offered unto all; and, by the commandment of the everlasting God, every individual in the family of Adam is bound to accept and use it as his own.

These invaluable facts pervade the Sacred Volume, and are distinctly and forcibly pressed upon our attention in the words of the text. For though this sentence is generally considered as merely the prohibition of idolatry, or the worship of graven images, it in reality comprehends something far more important and interesting. Idolatry is expressly forbidden in the following commandment: and it would be strange to find the same crime interdicted twice within the compass of ten sentences. In summing up the ten commandments, our blessed Lord reduces their substance to two precepts—the love of God, and the love of man. Now, unless the first commandment not only discharges the worship of false gods, but requires us to take the Lord for our God, which necessarily obliges us to love and serve him, where could he have found cause for affirming that the substance of the first table of the law is—to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind? Such an inference surely could not be so easily drawn from the second commandment, which forbids idolatry: nor from the third, which prohibits perjury and profane swearing: nor from the fourth, which inculcates the sanctification of the Sabbath. Unless, therefore, something more had been implied in

the first and leading precept of the decalogue than merely the condemnation of idolatry, how could our adorable Redeemer have said, that the sum of the first and great division of the law is the supreme love of God?

These facts serve to conduct us to the conclusion, that idolatry is not the crime condemned in the text: that the sin which is here prohibited is the sin of taking the creature in any form for our portion or our trust, and of substituting created objects and enjoyments in the room of the true and living God. Now, as every precept enjoins the reverse of what it condemns; as the prohibition to covet requires the practice of beneficence and the cultivation of integrity and generosity; and the prohibition of murder requires the preservation of life and the exercise of brotherly kindness; the prohibition to have any other god binds us to take the Lord for our God, and to apply him to all the blessed and glorious purposes for which a gracious, infinite, and all-sufficient God can be applied and used. If any thing can be wanting to establish this inestimable truth, it is furnished by the preceding verse, where the Eternal Jehovah, addressing the congregation of Israel at large, declares, "I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." These words are the introduction, or preface to the decalogue; and the text is the echo, or response to the gracious language which precedes it. "I, the Infinite and Eternal Jehovah, in the whole immensity of

my power, and plenitude of my all-sufficiency, am the Lord thy God; and thou shalt have no other god before me. Thou shalt take me for what I am; and rely on me, and use me for thy God.”

In farther addressing you on these words, we shall consider—

I. The excellence and value of the privilege of having the Lord for our God; and—

II. The extent and freeness with which this invaluable blessing is bestowed.

I. The excellence and value of the privilege of having the Lord for our God.

This is the highest and noblest privilege which Deity can bestow, or which a creature can receive. This carries divine munificence to its height and perfection, and completes and crowns the felicity and dignity of the saints. With the universe at his command, and all the elements of nature at his disposal, it is easy for the infinite and all-sufficient Jehovah to lavish on his creatures the bounties of providence and the riches of creation; to place worlds under their controul, and invest them with the possession of their contents. He would only have to speak, and it would be done; to give the commandment, and it would stand fast. But, amidst his boundless might and infinite beneficence, what more can he confer on the highest and noblest in creation than to give them himself—to be for them and do to them

all that an infinite and all-sufficient God can be or do? His power is irresistible, his dominion is immense, his resources are inexhaustible. The sun shines merely on a province of his empire. The mighty expanse of the sky can enclose no more than his works. The celestial hosts are his creatures. The bliss of heaven is his production. Wherever a seraph can wing his flight, he is encompassed with the monuments of the power, and manifestations of the glory of the Most High.

But, amidst the magnitude of his works, and the exuberance of his munificence, we must remember that all he has already accomplished is only a mere specimen of his power. The resources of his nature infinitely surpass all the productions of his hands.

And is it possible that a Being of such unbounded power and inexhaustible resources should cast an eye of kindness and of pity upon creatures so insignificant and mean, and enter into any friendly alliance with sinners so vile and loathsome as we? With heaven for his habitation, and eternity for his dwelling, is it credible that he will make his abode with man upon earth, and take us for his people, and be to us a Father and a God?

It is not only possible, but unquestionable. There is nothing more certain. He has again and again pledged his word for the delightful and astonishing fact, that he will take us for his people, and be our portion and our God. Why was the Eternal Word made flesh? why did he dwell among us? submit to a life of poverty and suffering? ascend the cross, and die in agony and woe?

It was to break down the middle wall of partition that separated betwixt God and our polluted souls, and open a channel for the egress of divine benignity and love, and allow the Creator and Lord of all to become our Father and our God. Why does the Spirit of all grace open the eyes of our understandings, renovate our natures, put his laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts? It is that the Lord may be to us a God, and that we may be his people. Why are the ministers of Christ commanded to preach the gospel among all nations? That they may know that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and by the constraining influence of redeeming love to draw men out of the filth and abominations of an ungodly world, and bring them into the family of God, who will receive them, and be a Father unto them, and take them for his sons and daughters.

There is nothing to which believers have such an indefeasible right, and such a clear and indisputable title. God has never said that our families and friends, our life and health, our property and substance, are our own; and that he will uphold them under every change, and throughout all generations. But he himself is our own. All that he is, and all that he possesses, are laid open to our enjoyment, and provided for our benefit. The perfections of his nature, the bounties of his providence, the riches of his grace, the treasures of his glory, are all become our own; and, by his own matchless condescension and liberality, we are authorized to enjoy and

use the whole. For all things are ours. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

This is more than the possession of earth and heaven, of grace and glory; for it gives us an interest and a union with him who is in all, and through all, and who has heaven and earth, the stores of nature, and the riches of creation at his command. Having him for our God, our dignity is exalted, our safety is complete, and our blessedness must be boundless and everlasting.

Are any of you, enraptured with the excellence of such a blessing, and the dignity of such a glorious relation, solicitously inquiring who have a right to enjoy its ineffable privileges, and for whom have such vast and unutterable treasures been provided? Then you will follow me with pleasure, while I endeavour to unfold—

II. The extent and freeness with which the immense and inconceivable blessing in the text is bestowed.

It is offered to every child of Adam, and any human creature, upon his application to the Lord Jesus Christ, may secure all its felicity and glory for himself.

Many disputes have been agitated respecting the nature and extent of the gospel call, and the right and warrant requisite to embolden sinners to go to the Saviour, and embrace the blessings of his salvation. Many have puzzled and perplexed themselves with fruitless researches into the decrees of God, the hidden counsels of his will, and the fixed and immutable arrangements of his electing love. Many, in spite of all the

clear and forcible declarations of the gospel, maintain that it is impossible that they can be included in its calls and invitations. They affirm that they are too mean, vile, and unworthy to have any right to go to the Redeemer, or any warrant to claim blessings so multiplied and inestimable as those which his salvation imparts.

The language before us is calculated to cut up all these fears and jealousies by the roots, and to lay the controversy at rest for ever respecting the right of sinners to repair to the Saviour and embrace the blessings of his salvation. By the express authority and command of the everlasting God, every child of Adam is here prohibited from having any other god; or, in other words, he is enjoined to take the Lord for his God. And what else is this than to possess an interest in the riches of redeeming mercy, and in all the fulness of the gospel? By receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, what more can he give than the honour and privilege of having the Lord for our God? On introducing us into heaven, and placing us amidst its ecstasies and bliss, what more can we enjoy than the presence and love of the great and ever-blessed Jehovah? In having him for our portion and our God, we are complete. Time and eternity, grace and glory, can give us no more.

Now, so far from being left in a state of uncertainty and suspense about our right to go to the Redeemer, and lay hold on the blessings of his salvation; by the distinct and express authority of the great and the Eternal God, we are here commanded to do what is equivalent to the

receiving the fulness of the gospel salvation. We are commanded to take the Lord for our God. We are prohibited from having any other god before him. And does any man need an express and special warrant to do his duty? After we are distinctly and forcibly enjoined in the decalogue to reverence the name of God, to sanctify the Sabbath, to pay respect and homage to our parents: is a new and explicit warrant, written, signed, and sealed by the hand of the Most High, requisite to authorize us to sanctify his holy name, to hallow his sacred day, or reverence our parents and superiors? And after we are distinctly and positively enjoined, by the commandment of the everlasting God, to have no other gods before him; or, in other words, to take him for our God, what additional right or security can any child of Adam ask or desire, to encourage him to embrace all the riches of the gospel, and take the ever-blessed and all-glorious Jehovah for his God and portion? If any dispute about the extent of the gospel call, and question who has a title to go to the Saviour and lay hold on the blessings of his great salvation, I would like to know who has a right to remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, and to be just, honest, and humane? If you can tell who are prohibited from the performance of one of these duties, then I also can tell who is debarred from the other. If you can point out a man or a woman who, by express and positive statute, is interdicted from reverencing the name of God, from keeping holy the Sabbath, from speaking the truth, or preserving the life and pro-

perty of his neighbour, then, but not till then, will I also be able to point out a single wanderer of our helpless and ruined race, who is discharged from intermeddling with the mercy revealed in the gospel, and excluded from the privilege of coming to the adorable Redeemer, and claiming through him a right to the blessedness and glory of having the almighty and all-sufficient Jehovah for his God. In the case of the last nine of these commandments, nothing more than the simple injunction of our duty is necessary to enforce it. And shall we maintain that something more is indispensable to bind us to fulfil the first of the ten? After he has solemnly said to every individual, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, where, within all the scattered habitations of humanity, is there a man or a woman who is debarred from loving the ever-blessed and all-glorious Jehovah with his whole heart, and soul, and strength, and mind? And after he has in such distinct and impressive terms made known his benevolent pleasure, and placed at the head and fore-front of his precepts this delightful injunction, where, where is the individual, however vile and unworthy, who is excluded from the provisions of his love, and prohibited from taking the Lord for his God? By the terms of the text the blessings of salvation are rendered accessible to the whole human race; and the attainment of this high and glorious relation is made as much the duty as the privilege of every man to whom this authoritative mandate finds its way.

Nor is the language before us of a singular or solitary description. It is in perfect harmony and most lovely agreement with the whole letter and spirit of the Sacred Record. Into whatever corner of this blessed volume we can look, we find that the gospel of peace is not a well shut up, nor a fountain sealed; that it does not confine its provisions to a dozen or a score, to a few of a family or the remnant of a tribe, but lays its rich and precious treasures open to the enjoyment and use of all, and spreads the benign and healing influence of its grace over the whole extent of our apostate and ruined world. Its calls and invitations reach all the ends of the earth, and embrace every class and description of human wretchedness. "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Look at the apostles' commission, and say what terms could be more liberal and comprehensive? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." With this commission in my hand, I might travel over the length and breadth of the habitable globe, and address myself to every child of Adam, without the possibility of exceeding my instructions, or gathering sinners too fast, or in numbers too great, even though I should, in every region through which I passed, persuade all to look to him for life, and

come to him for salvation. This commission furnishes no authority to traverse other systems and preach the gospel to other orders of fallen creatures; but from the spot where I now stand, all round to the world's end, it is a complete and absolute warrant to preach the gospel to every creature, and fully authorizes us to invite all the children of men to the arms of redeeming mercy.

And why should any of our race be debarred from the provisions of redeeming love? Are there any by nature more vile and unworthy than others? more unfit to be the objects of divine compassion? or more incapable of partaking the immense and unsearchable riches of his grace?

Shall we be told that there is any defect or limit in the atonement of Immanuel? Was he unable to bear the whole burden of human guilt, and expiate all the crimes and transgressions of our rebellious race? Were his shoulders too feeble to sustain the dreadful load? or his person possessed of too little dignity and worth to give efficacy to his sufferings and death, and render his sacrifice sufficient for the expiation of the sins of the world? In himself he was God as well as man; and, granting that our sins are ever so heinous, and our numbers ever so great, yet on collecting into one all the sins of all the children of men, to what more could the whole amount than an infinite mass of loathsomeness and filth? And can the sufferings and sacrifice of a person of the divine dignity and matchless excellencies of the Son of God be less than infinite? Let your former character

or present state be what it may, you may safely entrust into his hands the whole of your spiritual and eternal interests. You have no reason to fear that you shall be rejected or put to shame. The most virtuous and sober never can have redemption except through his blood; and the vilest and most worthless need not despair, for it cleanseth from all sin. At the consummation of all things, the bodies of the dead will be in very different stages of decay. Those who have last been deprived of life cannot raise themselves, and must be re-animated by his power; and this power can easily restore those which are in the state of most complete dissolution. The most moral and respectable of our race never can obtain salvation except through him, for there is salvation in no other; and the most abandoned and profligate are not beyond the reach of hope. Jesus can save to the uttermost; and if they apply to him he will justify them freely and sanctify them wholly. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

And while there is an inexhaustible efficacy and worth in the obedience and sacrifice of Emmanuel to expiate all our guilt, and ensure the pardon and acceptance of all our race; are we for a moment to imagine that there is any backwardness on the part of God to receive those

who return, and bestow upon them the blessing of his salvation? He is the Father of mercies and the God of love. Within the ineffable and boundless extent of his all-sufficiency and grace, there are ample means to embrace and welcome all who come. We may measure the height of the stars, and tell their number and their names; but can we describe the power and resources of the Almighty? or ascertain the amount of his generosity and goodness—his liberality and love? When he lighted up the bright and beauteous sun, within his fair and splendid orb he lodged a plenitude of light and heat to illumine the heavens, and poured around our globe the liquid atmosphere; he gave them bounds and expansion to admit the presence of all that move and breathe, and furnish them with an inexhaustible fund of vital air. And when he drew the plan of redeeming mercy, he gave it room and amplitude sufficient to embrace all the posterity of Adam who are willing to accept its provisions and take its blessings for their portion. At the first formation of man, abundant means were provided for the happiness and welfare of the whole human race. And has the Father of peace and the God of love made less provision for the safety and blessedness of all who have recourse to the glorious gospel? He so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. His heaven is large enough to receive the whole. Jesus commands his ministers to carry the glad tidings of reconciliation and peace round the earth. And he himself assures us,

that him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. The sin of Adam is not more powerful to vitiate and condemn, than the righteousness of Christ to justify and bless. "The judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by Jesus Christ."

What more could a God of boundless benignity and unsearchable love have done to dissipate the doubts and fears of the timid and jealous, than what he has already adopted? Has he any Son more dear and loved than the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he may surrender to death? Can any sufferings be more painful and severe than the agonies and tortures of the cross? And yet has he not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all! How much more, then, will he not, with him, freely give to those who receive him, all things?

Do you still doubt his liberality and love, and question your right to believe on his Son? Then look at his remonstrances and calls, his expostulations and entreaties with the careless and secure, the impenitent and hardened. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he

with me. Oh! that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen doth her brood, under her wings! Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?"

And what shall I say more? To his general unlimited earnest remonstrances and calls, he has added his distinct injunction. He does not merely permit or authorize us to take him for our God; but he lays his command on our conscience, and makes it a matter of duty and obligation to take him for our God, and live upon the riches of his grace, and the fulness of his salvation.

Instead of debating about the right and warrant of the sinner to come and embrace the provisions of the gospel, the question is, Who is debarred access to the fountain of life, and excluded from the warm and liberal flow of his munificence and love? The mere communication of what is necessary for the happiness and comfort of the creature, is to him a right and title sufficient to enjoy and use it. After God has given us eyes and ears, instead of disputing who has a right to enjoy and use them, I would like to know who is destitute of a claim to their use, and deprived of authority to avail himself of their advantages and comforts? After the arm of Jehovah has hung out the effulgent orb of day to illuminate and to cheer the countless millions of our race, I would like to know who is to be prohibited from basking in his rays,

and enjoying the benefit of his light and heat? After God has poured around our planet the vital air, who is interdicted from its refreshing and invigorating influence? And when he has sent his mercy after us, and invited all the worthless and helpless wanderers of our race to return to the arms of his compassion, and find their heaven of heavens in the possession of his benignity, I would like to know where is the man or the woman who stands excluded from the exercise of his kindness, and the provisions of his generosity and grace? There is none excluded by the calls and offers of the gospel; for these extend their benignant and joyful proclamations to the utmost ends of the earth, and invite all the children of men to their rich and bliss-inspiring provisions. Excluded they are not by the limited efficacy or scanty nature of the atonement: for it is all-sufficient, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.

Thus, then, I trust, from what has been submitted to your consideration, you see the universal extent of the gospel call, and the absolute freeness of its offers; and that you discover, notwithstanding all your alarm and fears, your encouragement to press forward to the Saviour's presence, and embrace for yourselves that infinity of blessedness and glory included in having the almighty and ever-blessed Jehovah for your God. After his own distinct and forcible command to have no other gods before him, or to take him alone for your God, where is there a power in heaven, on earth, or within the mighty confines of creation, that has authority to deprive you of your right,

or debar you from the possession and use of this inestimable and glorious privilege? Is there a created arm more powerful than the hand of Omnipotence? Is there any among the reptiles of earth a match for the Almighty, and capable of defeating his kind and benevolent designs? Is there a being within the wide range of immensity possessed of a deeper insight than himself into his counsels, who is warranted to contradict his declarations, and affirm, in the face of his universal invitations and free and unfettered offers, that only a few are entitled to venture into his presence, and lay hold on the riches of his grace? After he has said, Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely; and assured us that him that cometh he will in no wise cast out; who can have the presumption and baseness to limit the generous and godlike current of his kindness, and debar a single human being from the immense and unsearchable provisions of his grace? When a king sends to a city languishing under the horrors of famine a supply of provisions sufficient to meet all their wants, and appointed expressly for gratuitous distribution amongst the whole, who has a right to intercept the flow of his bounty, and cut off the meanest and most obscure within its walls from the effects of his munificence? When the hands of the Most High have lighted up the brilliant orb of day, and placed him in the open firmament of heaven for the common benefit of all who live, who has a right to arrest his rays, or deprive the most poor and helpless of the privilege of sharing in the exhilarating influences of his

light and heat? And when I hear that God has so loved the world that he has given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life; when I hear him declaring that Christ Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost; that he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; when I hear him commanding all men every where to repent and believe the gospel, and telling us that this is the work of God, that we believe on him whom he hath sent; I would like to know who has a right to come betwixt the adorable Redeemer and us, and exclude us from the rich and unsearchable provisions of his grace? Has no man a right to debar us from the use of the vital air, or prevent us from enjoying the refreshing comforts of life and heat? And who has a right to shut us out from the tender mercies of our God, or deprive us of the blessings purchased by the blood and sufferings of his Son?

Whatever, then, may have been your past character or present state, take encouragement and come to the divine and adorable Redeemer. His own generosity gave these free and general invitations, and his faithfulness is engaged to make them good. And has he said it, and will he not do it? Has he spoken it, and will he not bring it to pass?

But remember, amidst all the liberality and generosity of his invitations and offers, the salvation of the gospel must be accepted, this God must be chosen for our God, before these unspeakable boundless blessings can be

enjoyed. Throughout the whole range of his dispensations in nature, providence, and grace, the Lord has connected the means with the end in a strong and indissoluble bond. We cannot enjoy the munificence of the most liberal benefactor unless we receive it. We cannot profit by the clearest sunshine unless we open our eyes and admit the light. And what benefit can we derive from the Saviour unless we believe on him? from his salvation, unless we embrace it? from the love and all-sufficiency of the Lord, unless we take him for our own God? Religion is a personal thing, and what every individual must acquire for himself before he can obtain the smallest advantage from all the blessings which it unfolds. The most powerful specific neither extirpates the disease nor sustains the body under the malady, but cures in succession the individuals who apply it. The sun neither annihilates darkness, nor gives sight to the blind, but merely enlightens those who behold it. And Jesus has neither extinguished hell, nor provided pardon and felicity for men who are in their sins: he brings salvation only to those who receive him.

If you refuse to receive him, you must perish. If you neglect the glorious gospel, you must be undone for ever. There is salvation in no other.

After all that has been stated, will any say, "I am afraid that such a great and glorious privilege never could be intended for a creature so mean and insignificant, so vile and wretched as me? It is the greatest and noblest privilege that God can bestow, or that a creature

can receive. It would add dignity to the rank of a seraph, and increase the bliss of an angel. How then can it be designed for such a guilty and worthless worm as me?" Remember that it is not given for the sake of our worth, but for the manifestation of his own matchless munificence and unsearchable liberality and love. Others have been blessed with its possession. Heaven is filling up with the redeemed from among the sons of men. And were they originally superior in dignity or virtue to you? By nature we are all on a level, and are alike the children of condemnation and wrath. And since others who were no better than you have been put in possession of this ineffable privilege; since with God there is no partiality nor respect of persons; take encouragement and come to the adorable Redeemer, and you also shall partake of all the riches of his grace and all the treasures of his glory.

"The language of this commandment is general. It is addressed to all. Now, it is well known that it never will be obeyed by all; and therefore it is manifest that God will never be the God of all mankind; and how, then, can I be satisfied that he will be my God?" The language is universal, for the express purpose of cutting off all those suspicions and jealousies, all those objections and cavils, and assuring us that it is meant for you and every one who will believe and embrace it. None are without God but those who refuse to receive him. How could a stung Israelite know that the brazen serpent was erected for his benefit, and that he had a right to look to

it for the healing of his wound, except from the general assurance that whosoever should look on it should be cured? How do you know that you have a title to the use of the light or the rain, but by finding that they are falling all around you? And how can you be more completely assured that God, in all the plenitude of his power and grace, is ready to become your God, than by hearing that he has so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, and by his commanding you to have no other gods before him?

“But I am not named in this precept, nor designated in any of the promises of the gospel.” And pray does this exempt you from fulfilling what the commandment enjoins? Because you are not mentioned in the statutes of the realm, are you released from obedience to the laws of Britain? Because you are not named in the following precepts, are you at liberty to steal or murder?

“But I am not elected; and till I know my election, what advantage can I derive from the most free and gracious invitations that language can express?” Have you any evidence that you are not elected? Till once you know that you are elected, have you liberty to blaspheme the name of God, and profane his Sabbaths? And because you apprehend that you are not elected, have you a right to disregard your duty and to have other gods before the Lord? Our business is to do what he has commanded us, and leave secret things to himself.

“But the work is difficult, and I have no ability to

perform it." The work is important and invaluable, and you may have no inclination to fulfil it. Is it a great and difficult work for a man to see who has eyes, and is surrounded by sunshine? It would be impossible for a man to see who had neither light nor eyes. It would be a difficult thing for a sinner to secure an interest in the all-sufficiency of the ever-blessed God, if he were previously required to make an atonement for his sins and propitiate the divine favour. But what can be more easy than to secure the blessing and friendship of the Most High, after Christ has finished transgression and made an end of sin—after he has made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness? If you will only part with your other gods, Jehovah is your own. If you will not reject him, in all the tenderness of his compassion, and all the plenitude of his all-sufficiency, he is your own. If the worldly will renounce their selfishness, if the careless will give up their security and sloth, if the graceless and ungodly will abandon their rebellion and unbelief, and give up their heart to him who made it, to him who owns it, to him who claims it and longs to enjoy it, the ever-blessed and all-sufficient God is your own. He requires no courting nor solicitation. All that he demands is that we shall not put him away, and place an enemy in his room.

In conclusion, then, let me entreat one and all to lay hold on the blessed gospel, and embrace the great and glorious salvation. It is not only your honour and privilege, but your clear positive indispensable duty to

take the Lord for your God. To reject the gospel, to refuse to have the Lord for your God, is at once a sin against him and your own soul. While it involves your soul in ruin, it is an act of daring disobedience to his authority, and an insult to his generosity and goodness. It is a virtual declaration that his favour is not worthy of your acceptance, and that his authority is not entitled to your regard. And can any outrage be more criminal and offensive, more insulting and insufferable? Can any act of rebellion deserve a doom more tremendous and severe?

SERMON II.

THE GOSPEL THE RELIGION OF THE POOR.

1 CORINTHIANS, i. 26—29.

“ For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

I CANNOT tell how the poor and needy feel when such a text is read ; but I think I have some idea how they ought to feel. To be called by the grace of God, throws all created felicity and grandeur into the shade. Peers and princes, kings and emperors, might exult in this as eclipsing all their pomp and splendour, and far surpassing the worth of their rents and revenues—their thrones and sceptres—their estates and kingdoms. To be called by the grace of God would throw grandeur around the state, and consolidate the joy of angels, and might justly call forth the loudest strains from seraphim and cherubim.

What, then, do you who are poor and indigent think, when such a dignity and privilege are not only attainable by you, but are specially heaped on the heads of such as you? What do you think of the astonishing fact? Do you remember what your adorable Master thought of it? He was a man of sorrow; reproach broke his heart; and he had very few gleams of sunshine in his pilgrimage through this guilty and polluted world. But he had one hour of bliss. And what occasioned his ecstasy? The conversion of the poor, mean, and ignoble. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Luke x. 21.)

I hope that I shall enjoy your attention and prayers, while I endeavour to show you,

I. What is implied in effectual calling.

II. The situation and character of the greater part of those who are effectually called.

III. The reasons why men of their rank and character are generally called, when the wise, mighty, and noble, are left in their graceless and ruined condition.

I. Let us consider what is implied in effectual calling.

"What is effectual calling? It is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery; enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ; and re-

newing our wills ; he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel."

It is the work of God's Spirit. The priests could lift the rams' horns, and sound a blast ; but it was the power of God that shook the walls of Jericho, and laid the fortifications flat. Gehazi could carry the staff, and lay it on the face of the child ; but God alone could restore the departed spirit. The prophet could walk round the valley, and speak to the scattered dust ; but nothing less than Omnipotence could bring bone to his bone, and make the slain stand upon their feet, an exceeding great army. And ministers may preach the word—our week-day, and Sabbath-school teachers may be instant in season and out of season ; but unless the hand of the Most High be upon us, and infuse his energy into our exertions, we must labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought and in vain. But when the Spirit of God concurs, he produces results the most signal and glorious. He can open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf : he can make the dead hear his voice, and cause them to come forth from their graves.

In what state does he find those whom he calls ? Mean and miserable—guilty and polluted—without God and without hope—dead in trespasses and sins. This is the natural condition of every child of Adam. And we are no better than others. By nature we are the children of disobedience and wrath. We do not acquire spiritual life, and leave the Holy Ghost to raise us up, or invig-

orate the life which we have first created. It is he himself that quickens us.

To what does he call us? To holiness and happiness—to God and Christ. We are naturally ignorant, careless, self-righteous, and self-sufficient. But whenever we are called by grace, we give all up for God. We improve ordinances—we devote ourselves to godliness—we are prepared for every good work. Our language is, Lord, what wouldst thou have us to do? But the very essence of effectual calling is the receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. Unconverted men hate the Lord Jesus. They may talk about him—attend his house and ordinances: but have they put their hearts into his hands? or admitted him into their hearts? Their souls would revolt at such a thought. They will talk of him and profess him; but they will not rest on him, submit to him, nor obey him. But the moment that a man is called by grace, he prefers Jesus to his chief joy, delights in him, cleaves to him, and renounces all for his sake. He dare not live without him. If he would let the Saviour go, he would tremble lest the next moment he should sink into hell. In all heaven there is nothing better than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his presence that creates heaven, and, to a soul called by grace, renders it the perfection of beauty and of excellence.

Those who are called are thankful for any mercy; but their hearts overflow with love and gratitude for this mercy of mercies, the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. They delight to dwell on the grace of God—the riches of

his grace—the unsearchable riches of his grace. Even when their hearts are most warmed and melted with his love, they are astonished and ashamed at their own lukewarmness and coldness. They long for that better and nobler state, when they shall see him as he is, serve him as they ought, and love him with their whole hearts. Till then they will continue to cry, To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory, and honour, and blessing, and praise.

And what is the end of their calling? It is to salvation and glory. He calls us from darkness to light,—into the fellowship of Christ,—into his eternal glory.

II. The situation and character of those who are called by grace. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.”

The greater part of converts are foolish, weak, base, and despised. If you look at their rank, they are mean; at their talents, they are slender and feeble; at their character, they are guilty and vile.

It is a wonder how any poor man can keep back his heart from God. In the whole universe the obscure and indigent have no such benefactor and friend as the great and ever-blessed Jehovah. Many of the great and noble are the patrons and protectors of the poor, and spend their time and substance to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of their indigent and helpless brethren. But this is far from being the case with all who walk in

the higher circles of society. Many of these trample on the rights and interests of those who are destitute of this world's goods, and unable to vindicate their own liberties and privileges, and subject them to the violence of their cruelty and fury. How often may we still employ the words of James, Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?

But that God, who is over all, is rich unto all. With him there is no partiality nor respect of persons. The highest is not independent of his aid, and the least is not beneath his notice. The small and great are alike under his eye, and equally encouraged and invited to embrace his love. Our trees are taller than our shrubs, and our mountains are higher than our valleys; but to an eye which views them from the elevation of the stars these differences vanish, and the whole appear on a level. After travelling the mighty distance betwixt the sun and the earth, the light finds no more difficulty to reach our plains than our hills. And whatever gradations may appear to us in the rank, the talents, or character of our brethren, before the great and ever-blessed God all these distinctions shrink into insignificance; and, after having delivered up his almighty and eternal Son for the redemption of our guilty and ungodly world, the conversion of a king and a beggar, the salvation of the vilest transgressor, and of the most decent and sober in the ranks of criminality, is alike easy.

Accordingly, wherever there is a heart purified by faith, and sanctified by grace, there Jehovah takes up his residence, and imparts the best and most invaluable blessings of his kindness. The poor and indigent, so far from being overlooked and despised, are treated with peculiar tenderness, and honoured with special marks of his favour. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The gospel with all its ordinances, the Bible with all its promises, Christ with all the treasures of his grace and all the consolations of the Eternal Spirit, heaven with all its glory, God with all his power, liberality, and love, are brought within the reach, and pressed upon the acceptance, of the least and lowest of our race.

And is this the manner of men? They lavish their attentions on the great, and heap their favours upon the heads of the noble and illustrious. They are proud of their acquaintance with the wealthy and powerful. They are delighted with their society, and rejoice to enlist them in any humane or beneficent cause in which they are embarked. They boast of the peers and princes who patronize their institution, and have subscribed to its funds. They imagine that it would do great honour to religion to see peers and princes, scholars and philosophers, and men of rank and fortune, submitting to the obedience of the faith, and rallying round the standard

of the cross. And since the honourable and wealthy have been reared with the greatest delicacy, and lived in the enjoyment of temporal comforts, they think that they should have the preference in spiritual blessings, and stand highest in the kingdom of God.

But if the blessings of salvation had been confined to the learned and illustrious, the great and the noble, what an aggravation would this have been of the burdens and sorrows of the poor? They are liable to all the mental distraction and bodily distress that can assail the rich and wring the hearts of the high and royal. They have to toil for their daily food, and endure the want of many comforts which soothe the lot of the affluent and adorn the palaces of the great.

And when they are already borne down by the weight of their cares and labours, what an aggravation would it have been of their calamities if the blessings of redeeming mercy had been withheld from the poor and indigent, and confined to the wealthy and powerful? Give a man access to the gospel, and let him get hold of the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and what need he care about his rank in society or condition in the world? From the day that he is called by grace, all things are his. His body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. Christ dwells in his heart by faith. His soul is a habitation of God through the Spirit. The Eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. His bread shall be given, and his water shall be sure. The Lord is his God, and heaven his inheritance and home. You may

count the dust of the earth, and measure the height of the stars, but where is there a language which can describe, or a mind that can conceive, the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints? Are there any treasures greater than the unsearchable riches of Christ? Is any felicity more elevating and transporting than that peace which passes all understanding, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory? Can any honour be more exalted and glorious, than to be kings and priests unto God and the Lamb, and reign with Christ in righteousness for ever and ever? Can any portion be more immense and precious, than to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and filled with all the fulness of God?

Yet all these boundless and ineffable privileges are the inheritance of the least and lowest of the sons of men, who is called by grace, and lays hold on the great salvation. All things are yours. Ye are the children of God; and, if children, then are ye heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Have you taken Jesus for your Saviour, and given up your hearts to God? Then let your souls bless the Lord, and all that is within you be stirred up to bless his holy name. The Lord is the portion of your inheritance and of your cup. This is enough, and it will last through eternity.

But, without an interest in the gospel, what is the value of all the wealth, and learning, and honour in the world? What is the use of money to a drowning man?

What signify a sceptre and a throne to a man in the agonies of death? Give a man the riches of provinces, the resources of kingdoms, and the majesty of emperors, and whilst he is destitute of union to the Lord Jesus Christ, what is the use of the whole? What is the worth of creation, and all that it contains, to a man who is living without God in the world; carrying about with him a hard heart and a carnal mind; treasuring up for himself wrath against the day of wrath, and preparing himself for all the horrors of everlasting wretchedness? What now signify the purple and fine linen of the rich man, who is tormented in flames without one drop of water to cool his tongue? and what avail the luxury and splendour of graceless peers and princes, popes and emperors, while suffering the vengeance of eternal fire?

But when a man embraces the gospel, there is little more for him that Deity can do. All things are his. He may be destitute of this world's goods, but he is rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom that cannot be moved. He may be unknown to the world, and unnoticed by the learned and illustrious, but he is well known unto God, and will soon shine as the brightness of the firmament. He may have little learning, and few opportunities for improving his powers, but he is wise unto salvation, and has an unction from the Holy One. His body may be sickly, and his raiment mean, but his soul prospers, and he is all glorious within. His companions and associates may be unable to enrich or elevate him, but he is blessed with exalted and invaluable society. "If a

man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The time is soon coming when he shall leave all his weaknesses and wants behind him in the grave, when he shall rest from his labours, enter into the joy of his Lord, overcome and inherit all things.

And with such honours and blessings in possession, and such sublime and noble prospects before us, can we complain of our present poverty or meanness, obscurity and wants? We have secured the one thing needful; and the few troubles and trials under which we labour, are all designed for our future and eternal welfare. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Now, while such are the vast and unbounded blessings secured by the gospel, it is peculiarly adapted to the poor and needy, and lays open all its immense and invaluable treasures to the meanest and vilest of men.

When we say that it is peculiarly adapted to the poor and needy, we are far from affirming that they possess a monopoly of the gospel, or that Christianity is inaccessible to the higher classes of society, or unattainable by the rich, the learned, the powerful, and noble.

Lady Glenorchy used to remark, that it would have been a dreadful sentence for the great, if the apostle had said *not any*, instead of *not many*. God is no respecter

of persons ; and while he makes his light and rain to visit the mountain-tops, as well as the sheltered valleys, the blessings of the gospel are addressed indiscriminately to all, and every rank and class are made heartily welcome to the blessings of the great salvation.

Is wealth any barrier to the reception of divine truth ? Abraham, the friend of God and the father of the faithful, was rich in flocks and herds. Job, the most patient and pious of men, was the greatest man in the east. Daniel was the prime minister of the Persian empire. Joseph of Arimathea was an honourable counsellor ; Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews ; Jehosaphat and Hezekiah were kings. And to the present day palaces are as open as cottages to the gospel of peace. Peers and princes, as well as peasants, receive the Word of reconciliation : and, amidst all the toils and distractions of their important duties, thirteen of our members of Parliament are in the practice of meeting weekly for social prayer.*

Are mental talents and literary attainments any obstruction to believing the testimony of Jesus ? Men of the most gigantic minds and most prodigious attainments have been the humble disciples of the Saviour. The Reformers were men of such mighty intellectual power, and matchless erudition, that they looked like the descendants of another race. And in our own day, the men of most lofty and commanding genius, are the firm believers,

* This Sermon was preached June 30, 1833.

and most ardent admirers of the gospel. The brightest names which adorn the annals of fame, have been men of piety and prayer.

When we say that the gospel is the religion of the poor, we dare not affirm that all the poor are chosen, nor even that any are chosen on account of their poverty.

We dare not say that all the poor, and mean, and illiterate are chosen. Many of the lowest of our race are the most vile and abandoned, and sunk into the deepest state of baseness and brutality. They are destitute of religion, and strangers to every thing lovely, generous, and rational. If they have mental talent, it is perverted to purposes of madness and mischief. And if destitute of intellectual power, their conduct is so gross and grovelling, as to be absolutely disgusting and revolting. So far are all the poor and ignorant from being saved, that the Lord declares, This is a people of no understanding; therefore, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.

But though no man is saved on account of his ignorance, poverty, or meanness, the greater number of those who are called by grace belong to the middling and lower classes of society, who are despised by the rich and the learned for their meanness and ignorance.

Ages before his appearance in the world, it was foretold that Jesus would spare the poor and needy, and save the souls of the poor and needy; that he would redeem their souls from deceit and violence, and that their blood

would be precious in his sight. He commenced his ministry by declaring, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He rejoiced in the reproach cast upon him by the proud and self-righteous Jewish grandees. Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? He stated it as a decisive proof of his Messiahship, that to the poor the gospel was preached. And though no class was overlooked, the early converts to Christianity were generally of the lower orders. The first to embrace the Reformation were the middling and inferior classes of society. When once our nobility and gentry saw that the pillars of Popery were shaking, and that the fabric of superstition would inevitably fall, they willingly lent their aid to overturn it, in order that they might get hold of the tithes and church lands, and deprive the country of the benefit of the spoils: but so far were their hearts from being imbued with the influence of the gospel, that whenever the court began to turn its energies against the religious rights and liberties of the people, the nobility and gentry were among the foremost to lend their aid to wreath the chains of superstition and slavery round the necks of their brethren. But when the king and his creatures were feeding the flames of persecution, and labouring to extinguish the religion of Jesus through the land, who stood by the cause and crown of Emmanuel, took up the torn and bloody banner of Scotland's covenant, and, in our moors and glens, watched over the sacred but outraged rights of Zion's King and Lord?

Were these our noblemen and gentlemen? No: these were the first to break down the barriers and bulwarks of religion and liberty, and let in the floods of intolerance and bigotry—of impiety and profligacy—of superstition and despotism. We had a few heroes from the highest circles in society upon our side. Our fathers could point to the Earls of Loudon and Melville, to the Lords Cardross and Polwarth, to the blood of the murdered Warristoun, and the martyred Marquis and Earl of Argyle. But still the brunt of the battle was borne, and the fiercest of twenty-eight years' barbarous persecution, fell upon our ministers and merchants, our farmers and tradesmen, our mechanics and day-labourers. These were the first to lay down their lives for the truth, and the last to surrender a single iota of the faith once delivered to the saints.

And to the present day, who are the men who crowd our churches, hallow our Sabbaths, conduct our Sabbath schools, maintain our prayer meetings, pour in the funds for the propagation of the gospel, and are most actively and zealously engaged in the advancement of religion and righteousness? Though we have men of God in every rank, the great mass of the men of piety and prayer belong to the middling and lower classes of society. The English Methodists, who amount to little more than 120,000, and are composed generally of men from the poorest classes, support more missionaries, and raise as much money for the cause of religion, as the Church Missionary Society, which is open to the highest and wealthiest classes in all England.

III. The reasons why God generally selects the poor, mean, and feeble, to be the subjects of his saving mercy.

Two reasons are here assigned. One intermediate and subordinate, the other supreme and ultimate.

1. The intermediate and subordinate is to confound the wisdom, power, and grandeur of this world, and show the utter emptiness and worthlessness of those objects on which unconverted men are accustomed to rely.

Religion is the one thing needful. If it is secured, all is gained. The Lord becomes our God. Heaven is our inheritance and home. All things are ours.

If rank or wealth, genius, learning, or science, could recommend us to God and lead us to heaven, if they could give us a monopoly of grace, or even facilitate our conversion or salvation, their worth would be inestimable, and no man could prize them too highly, pursue them too keenly, nor grasp them with too great eagerness and tenacity. But can we maintain that these things contribute to our return to God, and smoothe the way to eternal life? When sanctified by grace, and consecrated to the service of God and the good of society, these enjoyments are invaluable. The Christian, when possessed of worldly wealth and mental power, is an ornament to religion, and a blessing to his generation. He is eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. He is a teacher of babes and an instructor of the foolish.

But so far from simplifying conversion and predisposing their possessors to seriousness and piety, through the deceitfulness of our hearts and the depravity of our

natures, they are rather an obstacle and barrier to the reception of genuine religion. Until we are converted and become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The highest and noblest, as well as the lowest and meanest; the most able and accomplished, as well as the most feeble and ill-informed, is by nature a child of disobedience and wrath. His mind is enmity against God. He is altogether as an unclean thing. He is vile and abominable, and never can have redemption but by the blood of Christ. There is salvation in no other. All must equally be saved by grace through faith, or else perish everlastingly. In salvation Christ is all in all. And until we count all but loss for his sake; till from the heart we say, in the Lord have we righteousness and strength, we cannot be the disciples of Christ. But we never will count all but loss for his sake, till our loftiness is brought down, and our arrogance laid low, till we repent and abhor ourselves in dust and ashes.

But, so far are outward advantages and prerogatives from promoting humility of mind and contrition of spirit, that they tend to inspire men with vanity and self-conceit; and instead of drawing us nearer to God, and leading us to submit to the righteousness of Christ, widen the distance betwixt God and our souls, and tempt us to reject salvation by grace. Man is naturally vain and arrogant, and he eagerly seizes on any peculiarity in his mind or body to feed his haughtiness and self-conceit. Is he possessed of greater talents and

attainments than his neighbour? He is on the watch to show his superiority over his brethren, though at the expense of wounding their feelings and exposing their ignorance and weakness. Is he master of greater wealth and property? He thinks that a sufficient reason for strutting past his poorer neighbours, with all the airs of the most disgusting stateliness and stiffness. Is he endowed with greater bodily strength and vigour than his companions? With all the ferocity of a brute, he employs his strength to harass and annoy those who are unable to match or overpower him. Has he maintained a more sober and respectable conduct than those who are around him? He thanks God that he is not as other men, nor chargeable with the gross crimes that degrade and disgrace the worst of the wicked. So that the bounties of providence, and the mental endowments with which some men are furnished, instead of promoting, rather prevent their conversion; and, however useful in themselves, through the perversity of their owners are turned into a curse instead of a blessing. Are they rich? They trust in uncertain riches. Are they endowed with genius? Their knowledge puffeth up. Are they possessed of honour and authority? They scorn to descend to the level of the poor and needy, and accept of salvation as the gift of grace.

Now, how completely are all these external distinctions cast into the shade; what a stain is put upon the pride of all human glory, and the wise and mighty confounded, when the saving truths of religion are concealed

from the wise and prudent, and revealed even unto babes; and the meanest and weakest of men are made masters of all the blessings of the gospel, while the rich and noble are left to live without God, and die without hope? Can we contemplate these things without crying, Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? This arrangement teaches all flesh to be silent before the God of glory. It shows them that salvation is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And it compels those who are called by grace to say, Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name be the glory.

2. The apostle mentions a higher and nobler design in God's passing over the rich and the learned, and calling the poor and illiterate to the enjoyment of his salvation. "That no flesh should glory in his presence."

He is Lord of all. Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. He has a right to do what he will with his own; and both in the gifts which he bestows, and in the manner in which he confers them, he is determined to secure the honour due to his great name, and neither to give his glory to another nor his praise to the empty and self-sufficient creature.

But while throughout all nature he has a right to do what he will with his own, much more is this the case in the dispensations of his saving mercy. We have forfeited every blessing, and exposed ourselves to the severest condemnation. The high and the low are alike

dead in trespasses and sins, and never can obtain salvation except through free, rich, reigning grace. If any natural talent or any temporal distinction could give one man an advantage above another, and form a passport to the possession of religious blessings, this would have destroyed his absolute dependence on the grace of God, and laid a foundation for boasting. But when no mental endowment, nor outward enjoyment, gives one man a preference to another; when all lie completely at the mercy of the Most High, this levels all distinctions, and forcibly impresses us with the fact that in his presence we are less than nothing, and that in salvation he is all in all.

But, while this part of the divine conduct excludes boasting, it also illustrates many of the attributes of Deity.

1. It glorifies the kindness of God.

His best and noblest gifts are distributed with a liberal hand, and scattered indiscriminately among all. Those donations are of an inferior value which are more rare, and confined to few. Health is far superior to an estate; a sound eye is of more use than a telescope; and a clear and vigorous understanding is far beyond the worth of the greatest erudition. Now, if few can succeed in acquiring estates and fortunes, what multitudes enjoy health and strength! If few can furnish themselves with telescopes and microscopes, almost all are blessed with eye-sight. And if only a handful can afford the leisure to improve their powers, and command the acquisitions

of learning, the benefits of reason and understanding are most liberally bestowed. And what are all the advantages of genius, rank, or fortune, compared with the blessings of religion? Religion ennobles the condition of a king, raises a peasant above the highest graceless emperor, and will soon place the meanest believer on a level with the highest angel in heaven. Now these inestimable, ineffable blessings, are brought within the reach of all, and pressed upon the acceptance of the least and lowest of our race.

What a display is this of the endearing, unsearchable liberality of God? When the higher ranks of society are thin, and the lower walks of life are crowded, if salvation had been either directly or remotely connected with wealth, genius, or grandeur, to what a dreary and dreadful condition would this have reduced the great mass of men? Few could have been saved. But by rendering the blessings of salvation free and accessible to all, we are compelled to proclaim his benevolence, and maintain that he is no respecter of persons. If he had placed an insuperable barrier betwixt any class of his creatures and his best and most precious gifts; if he had provided a dim and feeble sun for the use of the poor, and a great and splendid luminary for the benefit of the rich and noble; if he had furnished the learned and ingenious with a pure and salutary air, while the laborious and indigent were condemned to inhale a gross and sickly atmosphere, we might have complained of his partiality. But if we must assert his goodness, when he has given every class of the human race equal access to the same

sun and air; if we must assert his goodness, when the eye and ear of the mechanic are as acute as those of a philosopher, and the limbs of the peasant as strong and well formed as those of a prince; if we must assert his goodness, when we find that the tradesman and labourer are endowed with an understanding as clear and sound, and affections as warm and tender, as the peer and potentate, what are we to say, when the light of revelation and the blessings of redeeming mercy infinitely surpass the worth of the sun, and moon, and stars, and all that creation contains? what are we to say when these are rendered accessible to every child of Adam; when the doors of the church and the gates of glory are set wide open to men of every rank and station; and the blessings of the everlasting gospel are as attainable by the poor as the rich, by men in the lowest circumstances and of the feeblest capacities as by those in the loftiest situations, and possessed of the most gigantic powers and mighty attainments? This demonstrates that he is good unto all, and that with him there is no respect of persons.

2. This conduct glorifies the justice of God.

How does it glorify the justice of God? He has made of one blood all flesh to dwell on the face of the earth. He encompasses all alike with his loving kindness, and commands us to bear one another's burdens, and love our neighbour as ourselves. If any are labouring under any defect, or exposed to any danger, so far from treating them with peculiar harshness or disdain,

reason and humanity require us to show them uncommon tenderness and attention. If the man is blind, we must lead him; if lame, support him; if ignorant, we must instruct him; if indigent, we must supply his wants, and direct him to the means by which he may provide for his own support. A mother never thinks of confining her affections to her healthy and full-grown children, and abandoning the delicate, feeble, sick, or blind infant. The most helpless and sickly is exactly the one who engrosses most of her attention and care. But how do the supercilious and haughty among the learned and ingenious, the great and the noble, who are destitute of the grace of God, treat the mean and indigent, the ignorant and ignoble? With cold neglect, and sometimes with the greatest harshness and severity. It is to no purpose that we tell these lordly sons of pride that all men are brethren; that the least and the lowest has a soul as well as the greatest and highest; and that, compared with the worth and grandeur of the immortal spirit, worldly honours and temporal distinctions are less than nothing, and vanity. Overlooking the inherent dignity and grandeur of the immortal mind, they regard their rank and fortune, their talents and attainments, as all in all. They scorn the lot of the poor, and frown in high disdain on their inferiors in mental talent or worldly wealth.

Now, when religion so infinitely surpasses all the paltry distinctions among men, can any arrangement be more just and beautiful than to see the haughty and self-

sufficient surpassed in all that is great and noble by them whom they despise, and whom they teach their children to abhor? If the Jews must have been mortified to see the Gentiles from all quarters of the globe pressing into the kingdom of heaven, while they themselves were cast out; if the pride of Haman was shocked by being suspended from the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, with what consternation and confusion must it overwhelm the self-conceited and scornful to see the men whom they had insulted and abused, loaded with the treasures of grace, and welcomed to the world of glory, while they themselves are banished from the divine presence, and subjected to shame and everlasting contempt?

This proceeding glorifies the justice of God by showing the equity of their condemnation. They contemn the poor and illiterate as mean and despicable. They boast of their own talents and attainments as prodigious and wonderful, and wish all men to admire them for the amount of their fortune and the strength of their genius. Now what prevents their salvation? When the same Saviour has been provided for the whole, and the same Sabbath and the same Bible have been sent to all, can it be said that they are destitute of the means of grace? Or can they assert or insinuate that the truths of revelation are so mysterious and abstruse as to be incomprehensible, or that the duties of Christianity are so numerous and heavy as to be impracticable? Out of their own mouth they are condemned. The very men

whom they despise as the weakest and meanest of our race have strength and talent sufficient to understand, believe, embrace, and obey the gospel. They become wise to salvation, and believe unto eternal life. And if the very poorest and feeblest of our race, amidst all their disadvantages and drawbacks, have time and leisure, ability and discernment, to embrace the truth and secure their own salvation, what prevents men of your mighty powers and marvellous attainments from knowing the things that belong to your peace, and becoming wise to salvation? If the child can bear the load, what can hinder the grenadier from carrying the burden? If an arrow or sling stone can lay prostrate the object, what can prevent artillery from overturning it? And when the foolish, weak, and vile things of the world, the youngest, meanest, and most illiterate, are capable of rising to the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and possessing all the vast and unbounded treasures of redeeming love, what retains you in the darkness of spiritual ignorance and in the chains of moral bondage? What keeps you the victims of vice and the slaves and drudges of Satan? Your destruction is of yourselves, and you perish in consequence of no secret or arbitrary decree, of no difficulty nor obstacle in the way of salvation, but because you hate the humility, the holiness, and self-denial which the gospel enjoins, and love the ease and gaiety, the pride and levity, the carelessness and carnality which lead to everlasting death.

3. This arrangement displays the power of God.

How does it illustrate his power? It is no great difficulty to make a man of learning and genius comprehend an argument and follow a train of reasoning. But it is no easy matter to reduce these to the level of the young, and subject them to the apprehension of those whose minds have not been improved with culture nor expanded with learning. Now this is what is daily and hourly done by the God of love, who chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; who out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ordains strength and perfects praise. How great is the power which he displays, when he makes those who have little taste or art for logical discussion feel and admire the demonstration of the Spirit? when he renders those who are strangers to philosophy and science masters of the deep things of Deity, and familiar with the whole counsel of God? and enables those who, in worldly matters, are on a level with their neighbours, to speak of God, and Christ, and heaven, and the great things of the gospel, with eloquence and power?

It shows his power by purifying and spiritualizing the views and feelings of the most coarse and uncultivated classes. To those who are already polished and refined there is no great hardship in giving an additional elegance and charm. But it requires great power to raise the gross and grovelling from the lowest ranks of life, and the most neglected classes of society, and give them the attitude and air of the citizens of Zion, and the children of the King of kings. This, however, is the case with

all who embrace the gospel of Christ. While the wise and learned, the mighty and noble, are often gross and vulgar in their language and conversation; while they can give utterance to every thing profane and vile; while they are selfish and niggardly, sordid and grasping in their dispositions, look at the faithful. Whether they are high or low, rich or poor, from the moment that grace takes possession of their hearts, their tempers are sanctified and sweetened; their affections are purified, and their hearts are enlarged. They become a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. They display the meekness and gentleness of Christ. In prosperity, they are humble: in adversity, patient. They rejoice in tribulation, and glory in the cross. They love their enemies, and do good to them that hate them. They are like-minded with Christ; and as they have borne the image of the earthly Adam, they bear the image of the Lord from heaven.

God shows his power by maintaining the gospel in the world, and carrying forward its triumphs by the agency of the meanest and feeblest men.

It is easy to reduce a city when the besiegers are furnished with a proper supply of artillery, but utterly impossible when they are possessed of nothing but rams' horns or instruments of music. There is no difficulty in subduing an army of twenty thousand, when we march against it with twice the number of superior troops; but it would be declared impossible to conquer it with three hundred men armed merely with lamps and pitchers.

If the gospel had been entrusted to the propagation and defence of philosophers and statesmen, kings and legislators, many suppose that it might easily have made its way in the world, and maintained its place on earth. But when committed to fishermen, tax-gatherers, and tent-makers, to men of the lowest rank, and most completely destitute of political power and influence, how was it possible to find its way among the nations, and secure its permanency among all succeeding generations? So far from being fostered and patronized by the great and noble of the earth, vindicated by scholars and philosophers, and encouraged by kings and queens, from the first moment of its appearance it has been encountered by the derision and scorn of the votaries of science and philosophy, and at every step of its progress has been obliged to contend with the pride and power of kings and their councillors, of states and empires. And who have been the champions and heroes to whom the defence and the propagation of this noble cause have been entrusted? The gospel has been maintained and advanced not by men of equal rank and splendour, and of similar authority and influence; so that force could be met with force, and the violence and fury of the one party resisted and repelled by the troops and armies of the other. The defence and promotion of the gospel have been left to the poor and ignoble, to the humble and heavenly-minded among the inferior ranks of society, to pious merchants and farmers, to mechanics and day-labourers, to praying servant men and women,

and devout and holy children. And what have been the weapons of our warfare? The armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation. And what has been the consequence? The word of God has grown and prospered. It has overturned idolatry; subdued kingdoms; annihilated many systems of vice and superstition consecrated by years and consolidated by all the strength and energy of despots, with legions at their command. It has enlisted kings and philosophers on its side, and filled many nations with its blessed and invaluable fruits.

If the bush burning but not consumed, the fall of Jericho by the blast of rams' horns, and the defeat of the huge host of the Amalekites by three hundred men, furnished with lamps and pitchers—displayed the great power of God, what are you to say, brethren, when you see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world? This is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes. What he has already done is a specimen of what he shall hereafter perform, and a pledge and security for the accomplishment of all the great and glorious things which he has promised: that all the ends of the earth shall fear him, and the whole world be filled with his glory.

Thus have we seen, that while the provisions of the gospel are suited to men of every class, but generally

embraced by the lower orders of society ; we are compelled to admire the kindness and compassion of Immanuel, that while he invites kings and their grandees, he gains the hearts and affections of the least and the lowest. Let this precious and invaluable fact embolden all to go to the blessed Redeemer, and embrace the unsearchable provisions of his grace. When you can plead neither birth nor blood, wealth nor mental power—when you find that you are not only the vilest of sinners, but the meanest of men, you may fear that you are cut off for your part, and that your hope is lost. But to meet and remove this apprehension, look at the text. Meanness, poverty, and weakness, are no cause of exclusion. Rank, fortune, and genius, are no ground of preference, and constitute no recommendation. Though God be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly. As his light, and air, and heat find out all alike, his gospel is equally adapted to every creature, and commanded to be preached indiscriminately to the whole human race. The parent has the greatest tenderness for the feeblest and most helpless in the family ; and the Father of Mercies and the God of all consolation has the greatest solicitude for the worth and the welfare of the most abject and destitute of our race. Jesus was anointed to preach good tidings to the meek. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And while he casts down the mighty from their seats, he exalts them of low degree.

Let the rich, learned, and honourable learn not to be high-minded, but fear. As far as earth and time are

concerned, your advantages are great; and if you would devote them to God, they would be invaluable. But whilst these are withheld from God, and appropriated to your temporal ends and interests, so far from being of the slightest service to your soul, they are an obstruction and hindrance to your conversion and salvation. They tempt you to pride and arrogance, which are dispositions which the Lord abhors. They entice you to lean on your own understanding, and refuse calm and unqualified submission to the word of God. And this is a most dangerous spirit to a man who wishes to be wise unto eternal life; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. They betray you into habits of worldliness, and lead you to an inordinate attachment to the things of earth and time; and this is a state of mind utterly inconsistent with the indispensable Christian duty of laying up treasure in heaven—setting our affections on things above, and living by faith.

Learn, then, to guard against the dangers by which you are beset. Set not your hearts on your honours, riches, and learning. Do you regard honour as a cause of exultation? Is a man higher than his neighbour because he is placed on a hill, and the other is left in the plain? A child on a hill is higher than a giant in a valley: and a fool born to fortune and a title, may be higher than a saint who is condemned in the sweat of his face to eat his bread. But is a graceless peer or prince better in the sight of God than a humble and pious peasant?

Imbecility and folly, disease and death spare no class. Rank and fortune give no monopoly of wisdom, health, and worth. Instead of facilitating religion, they retard conversion and salvation. Rather, therefore, than glory in your distinctions, consecrate the whole to God. If, by courting your outward enjoyments, you lose your souls, you will glorify the justice of God in your condemnation; for your hands are making the bands by which you shall be bound.—

SERMON III.

THE OBJECT OF THE BELIEVER IN HIS ATTEND-
ANCE ON RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES.

EXODUS xxxiii. 18.

“ I beseech thee, show me thy glory.”

THERE is nothing by which a real believer is more readily and decisively known, than by a desire of perpetual improvement in religion. Lukewarm and formal professors are very soon and very easily satisfied with the attainments which they make. A slight degree of religious knowledge, the discharge of a few outward and superficial duties, and the possession of a few transient and unsubstantial joys, are perfectly sufficient to fill and satisfy all their low and ignoble desires. But nothing less than a thorough knowledge of the whole will of God, nothing less than complete deliverance from the remains of corruption and sin, nothing less than entire conformity to the image of the Saviour, nothing less than the perfect and uninterrupted enjoyment of God, can fill and satisfy the exalted and divine ambition of a

holy and heaven-born soul. Every fresh acquisition which he gains creates a longing for something more spiritual and ennobling, and every renewed communication of divine liberality and love is converted into an occasion and ground for soliciting some bliss more pure, and some honour still more elevated. In this manner religion appeared in the case of Paul. After twenty-eight years spent in the service of his Master, and after reaching an elevation in the Christian life which hitherto has been absolutely unrivalled, we find him declaring, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In this manner religion operated on the mind of Moses. When he uttered the petition before us, he had seen the glory of the Lord in the bush that burned and was not consumed. He had been honoured by Jehovah to perform his wonders in the presence of Pharaoh and his servants. At Sinai he had received the law in the midst of lightning, thunder, and tempest; and in the tabernacle of the congregation he had witnessed the milder lustres of the Deity, and been permitted to converse with him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. But these endearing manifestations of divine

power and love, so far from satisfying his wishes, only gave additional sublimity to his views, and greater strength and fervour to his holy desires. Delighted and transported with what he had already witnessed, we find him longing for closer access to Deity, and for more bright and engaging displays of his perfections. We find him, in the language of the text, saying, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

In illustrating this petition of Moses, we shall consider—

I. The object of his request; and,

II. The reasons on account of which he urged it with such importunity and ardour.

I. The object of his request. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

By the glory of God, mentioned in the text, some have supposed that all that is meant is merely the sensible appearance which, during the travels of the Israelites through the wilderness, accompanied the presence of the angel of the covenant. They have supposed that all that Moses solicited was to be strengthened for steadfastly beholding the Shechinah, or bright luminous cloud which rested on the tabernacle, and by its dazzling lustre tended to affect the mind with a sense of the power and sovereignty of the Lord Jehovah.

But the Shechinah was what he had already repeatedly seen, and what he had every reason to expect, if his life

were lengthened, that he would see again and again. Besides, the mere sight of this splendid cloud, however frequently renewed, was to a believer a matter of very small and inferior moment. The only circumstance which could have given it importance and value, in his esteem, was its fitness to impress him with more just and enlarged ideas of the character and perfections of the Lord. And if Moses did not desire to behold the Shechinah, we cannot for a moment believe that he had such gross and carnal notions of Deity as to imagine that he possessed bodily organs and could become an object of vision. And accordingly, you may observe that he does not say, "I beseech thee show me thy person," but "I beseech thee show me thy glory." The question, therefore, still returns, What are we to understand by this glory?

In general, glory denotes magnificence and splendour. The glory of a man consists in those qualities in his moral character, in his mental talents, or external circumstances, which raise him above the level of his fellow-creatures, and attract their veneration and esteem. In this sense we read of Solomon in all his glory, that is, in all the pomp and majesty of royalty. The Lord Jehovah has no occasion to borrow greatness from the works of his hands. He infinitely disdains the dumb show and artificial grandeur to which earthly monarchs are obliged to have recourse in order to increase their state and invest themselves with artificial dignity and consequence in the eyes of their subjects. He is essen-

tially, eternally, unchangeably, infinitely great, blessed, glorious, and lovely. His glory consists in his inherent attributes and excellences; those attributes and excellences which exalt and adorn his character, and which throw such a matchless infinite lustre round all his works and dispensations. And this glory is revealed, or shown, when his perfections are unfolded in their native extent and overpowering grandeur; and when his intelligent creatures have just and impressive views of the transcendent loveliness and absolute perfection of his nature; when in some measure they see what Jehovah is in himself; and are made to feel their own meanness and insignificance before him.

In the text, Moses seems to have prayed for the privilege of beholding the perfections of God in all the effulgence of their united matchless splendour. He seems to have been solicitous to obtain a distinct and steady view of the inherent eternal attributes and excellences of Him who is the source of all that is great or amiable throughout the whole creation. In this request there is perhaps a wish expressed for something more than what was either suitable, or even possible for him to obtain. In the present state no man could endure the sight of unveiled Deity. The most holy man that ever lived would be completely overpowered by an unreserved display of the divine attributes and excellences. In pity, therefore, to our weakness, God holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. The full manifestation of Deity is

reserved for that better world, where our natures shall be purified, and all our faculties and powers completely expanded, and brought to full maturity and perfection. When the earthly house of this our tabernacle is taken down, when our spirits have joined the general assembly and church of the first-born, then, but not till then, shall we be permitted, for then, but not till then, shall we be able to see him as he is.

But though the heart of this man of God was set on something more than what was either suitable, or even possible for him to obtain in this life; to a certain extent Jehovah approved, encouraged, and even granted his request: and by this means he has taught us that the prayer of Moses ought to be the prayer of each of us, and that in every instance in which we attend upon the ordinances of religion, or engage in the exercises of devotion, like him we ought to be anxious to enjoy a view of the divine glory.

It is melancholy to observe the low, base, and unworthy motives by which many professors are actuated in the performance of the most sacred services of piety, and in their attendance on the most solemn institutions of religion. Some have no motive at all. They go to the house, and even to the table of the Lord, because their fathers went, their neighbours go, and they are unwilling to be singular. The description of the mob at Ephesus may, with too much justice, be applied to many a congregation: "The multitude was confused, and the greater part knew not wherefore they were come together."

Some come to see, and others to be seen of men,—some come to silence the remonstrances of conscience for the omission of duty or the indulgence of sin; and others to pass an idle hour, or get their passions moved, or their affections warmed and softened. To them the preacher is as the lovely song of one who has a very pleasant voice, or can play well on an instrument.

Such are the grovelling sentiments and the sordid views of many of the professed worshippers of the holy and heart-searching God; and, by conduct so mean, and practices so irrational and absurd, they are provoking the eyes of his glory, and laying themselves open to the tremendous visitations of his wrath, at the very time that they imagine that they are doing him good service, and are entitled alike to his blessing, and the admiration of their brethren.

Widely different were the views and desires of Moses in his approaches unto God. And if we would wish to render him any acceptable homage, or to derive any advantage to our own souls from our attendance on the ordinances of grace, we must possess principles far more pure and spiritual, and be influenced by motives unspeakably more elevated and noble. The increase of his speculative knowledge, the transient agitation of his feelings, and the acquisition of a high reputation from man, are objects far too low, and ends utterly too insignificant, to attract the attention of the Christian's aspiring mind, or fix the affections of his elevated and holy soul. He advances beyond the shadow of religion,—he passes

through its form and shadow; and seeks for its substance and power, real inward sensible communion and fellowship with God. He thirsts not for secular wealth or speculative knowledge, but for God, the living God, that with David he may see his power, and that with Moses he may behold his glory.

This glory appears from all the works and dispensations of the Most High. The universe, throughout all its extent, is replete with the operations of his wisdom and beneficence; and wherever we can trace his agency, we behold bright and endearing proofs of his omnipotence and omniscience. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. The dispensations of his providence demonstrate that he is wise in counsel, wonderful in working, and that his understanding is unsearchable. But it is in the work of redemption where all his attributes are brought into exercise, and allowed to shine with a beauty and a brilliancy which otherwise would have for ever remained concealed. It is this which affords us the most overpowering display of his eternal excellences. It is this which engages and engrosses the contemplation of the holy portion of the creation; and which, through eternity, will call forth the loudest and most enraptured strains of joy and praise from a grateful adoring universe. Each of his works enables us to see far into his character; and the whole, when taken together, form a combination of exalted and engaging excellences, which transcend alike all comprehension and all praise.

When we are blessed with a view of this glory, it fills and occupies the mind. We have neither leisure nor inclination to think of aught besides. Subdued and awed by this ineffable sight, every faculty and affection of our souls is rivetted to the stupendous, the transporting subject. We feel ourselves alone with the invisible God. His presence surrounds us, and his majesty inspires the deepest reverence and awe. No posture is then sufficiently low, nor any language sufficiently humble, to express our feelings of meanness, insignificance, and vileness. We may be rich, or learned, or noble, when compared with some of our obscure, indigent, and illiterate brethren; but, in the presence of the God of all the earth, these distinctions disappear, and we find that we are lower than the least of the saints, and less than nothing.

Jehovah is at all times equally glorious. He is eternally and unchangeably great, blessed, and glorious. But his glory does not always appear, nor even when visible uniformly produce the same lively and powerful impressions. The sun is always the same, but he does not always shine; in other words, he is not always visible. Clouds and darkness often intervene, and hide him from our view, while he is rolling on his flood of light, and warning other nations with his rays. And while the Lord Jehovah is diffusing life, and joy, and gladness, and cheering millions of blessed beings in worlds to us unknown; there are seasons when no beam from his countenance is permitted to reach or irradiate our spirits. Till he himself is pleased to unfold it, we cannot behold

this glory. It is only by the illumination of the Holy Ghost that we can discover it to any saving or beneficial purpose. Though the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; how many neither know God nor love him! Though the holy Scriptures contain a distinct discovery of his nature, and a full revelation of his will, to many of the greatest strength of mind, and of the most indefatigable and persevering research, they are no better than a sealed book. "The natural man," however learned and ingenious in the things relating to time and sense, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

It is to no purpose, therefore, that the glory of the Lord shines around us. Unless his own Spirit open our eyes to behold it, it must shine in vain. Till we are blessed with the power of spiritual vision, we can no more savingly discern this glory than the blind can perceive the light of the sun. You know that the Bible is invariably the same. But how often do we read it with very different feelings, and with very different practical effects! At one time it is all light, and life, and sweetness; but at another time we read the same passage again and again, and find nothing but darkness, confusion, and perplexity. Under one sermon the word has been accompanied with power. We could rest on its truths and rejoice in its consolations. But at another time,

under the same or a similar discourse, we have remained cold, languid, and unaffected. Its remonstrances could not rouse, its denunciations alarm, nor its encouragements animate or cheer us. What different views had Jacob of God's presence at Bethel on the morning when he rose, from what he possessed on the evening when he lay down! God was equally present there at both—at all times. When, however, he stretched his head on his stony pillow, he thought little of the divine presence, and regarded the spot merely as a piece of common ground. But how were his ideas altered when blessed with the visions of God! “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not; and he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” What different views had Job of the divine character from description, and from actual sight? “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

These facts are sufficient to show the necessity of a divine revelation to enable us to obtain an impressive and profitable view of the glory of God. Moses knew the value of prayer in order to secure the possession of this blessing; and to this exercise accordingly he had recourse, saying, with all the earnestness and ardour indicated by the words of the text, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory.” Let us now attend—

II. To some of the reasons why Moses urged this request with such importunity and ardour.

He was induced to solicit this display of the divine glory, and every believer is led to entreat its manifestation,

1. On account of its intrinsic excellence and grandeur.

We seem to be formed with the love of what is beautiful and great. We rejoice in the opportunity of seeing a man who has ennobled his country by his talents, or improved and blessed it by his virtues. Places renowned for their antiquity, or rendered illustrious by the conflicts of freedom with the hordes of barbarians or the hireling hosts of despots and oppressors, have attracted the steps of pilgrims, and drawn the tear of sympathy from many an eye, and the thrill of admiration from many a heart. We gaze with delight on the magnificence of mountain scenery; we contemplate with rapture the wide expanse of the ocean; and dwell with ecstasy on the glories of the setting sun, and the brightness and stillness of the starry sky.

But if we are charmed with what is sublime or beautiful, where can we find an object to command the admiration of the mind, and rivet every affection of the heart, equal to the great and ever-blessed God? He is the perfection of beauty and of excellence; the source of all that is attractive or interesting in the creature, and of all that is lofty or lovely throughout the whole creation. The heavens are bright with beauty, and the earth through all its extent discloses scenes of stupendous grandeur and of the most endearing loveliness. But

all the grandeur that transports us, and all the beauty which blazes on us from every quarter, are only a faint ray and a feeble emanation from his own inherent, un-created, eternal excellences.

Worlds on worlds are perpetually revolving in the regions of space, far larger than the globe that we occupy. Immensity is crowded with suns and systems far more extended and brilliant than that of which our planet forms a part. But though the works of creation are vast and stupendous, and far surpass the comprehension of mortal minds, are these the best and fairest specimens of his mighty power and matchless perfections? Is it here where he has spread the most magnificent theatre for the display of his infinite might and unbounded resources; and whither the best and highest of his hosts come to study his perfections, and gather the most enlarged and exalted ideas of his lovely and glorious nature? With all its magnitude and grandeur, creation has no glory by reason of a glory that excelleth. It is in the wonders of redeeming mercy where God appears in character, and has given the most ample display of his peerless incomprehensible excellences. It is here where he has laid the foundation for the most elevated admiration, and the deep and ardent attachment of a grateful adoring universe. Here he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. To angels, principalities, and powers, he has made known by the church his manifold wisdom. Accordingly, these beings who excel in strength and wisdom, and are the best judges

of what is grand and lovely, when they wish to obtain additional discoveries of his unsearchable perfections, and warm their hearts with increasing affection and gratitude to the God whom they love and adore; do they betake themselves to the study of philosophy and science? Do they investigate the wonders of nature, or explore the extent and grandeur of the creation? Passing by suns and systems, they direct their flight to Calvary, and take their station at the cross. These are the things into which the angels desire to look. Here new wonders perpetually rise to their view; and they behold attributes and excellences exerted and illustrated in a form, which they should have sought in vain on the face of creation and amongst the mightiest and noblest works of his hands.

But, after all, what is it that we can discover, or that even they can behold? It is only a small portion of his ways. It is only the traces, but not the hiding of his power; a specimen of his perfections, but not the full amount of his resources. Eternity is too short, and the capacities of an angel too limited to find out the Almighty to perfection. But though the full extent of his works and perfections is not, and cannot be known; still we see enough to raise devout and adoring wonder; to justify the choice of every believing soul, and lead him to say, with Moses, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." For if his works and dispensations are stamped with such characters of grandeur, and impart such delight to the mind, what transport must attend a sight of himself! what ecstasy must arise from the unclouded

display of his eternal excellences! from seeing him as he is! from beholding him in his beauty! from viewing him in all his glory!

Moses implored this display of the divine glory, and every Christian adopts his prayer,

2. On account of the beneficial influence which it possesses upon the ordinances of religion.

The ordinances are invaluable. To multitudes now in the regions of perfect purity and everlasting felicity, the ordinances of religion were the means, in the house of their pilgrimage, of conveying peace, refreshment, strength, and consolation. But it is from the display of the divine glory that the ordinances derive all their use and value. Ministers may preach to the ear; it is the prerogative of God to preach to the heart. The sacraments may bring the blessings of salvation near, and represent them to our outward senses; it is the Spirit of God, and his Spirit alone, that can apply them effectually to the soul. A Paul may plant, and an Apollos may water; but even these must plant in vain, and water in vain, unless God himself give the increase. However fair and promising the outward means may appear; if God withdraw his presence or conceal his glory, all their power and efficacy are blasted. The whole of their beauty and majesty, of their light and sweetness, of their life and energy, depends upon his gracious presence and the manifestation of his glory. When these are imparted, the ordinances are clothed with an authority and influence, and enriched with an energy and unction,

and worthless. They are like clouds without water, or dry bones to a hungry soul.

Moses urged this petition, and every believer adopts it,

3. In consequence of the blessed effects which a display of the divine glory produces upon the soul itself.

It is the source of all that is pure, holy, and elevated in the soul. All the graces of the Christian life, and all the hopes and consolations of religion, depend, for their existence, their exercise, their energy, and growth, upon the presence of God and the manifestation of his glory. What makes the love of the Christian languish and wax cold? What relaxes his vigilance and abates his zeal? What damps the ardour of his resolution, and interrupts his holy joy? What renders him worldly in his mind and unstable in his conduct? What brings him down from the high elevation to which the faith of the gospel is fitted to raise him, and gives him such sad conformity to the corrupt people among whom he sojourns? To what are all these melancholy effects owing? To his distance from God, and his faint and indistinct views of the divine glory. It shall be otherwise in the morning of the resurrection. When we are brought nearer to him, we shall become better. When we see him more clearly, we shall resemble him more closely. "When he appears, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

What constitutes the felicity and purity of heaven, and renders it the happy and blessed place that it is? This does not arise from its peculiar situation, the sublimity of its scenery, nor the beauty and magnificence of its towers

and palaces; but from the display of the divine glory in all its peerless attractions and unclouded splendour. "The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." What is it that gives perfection to the spirits of the just, and completes their dignity and bliss? It is their nearness to the uncreated fountain of beauty and of goodness, and their clear and uninterrupted vision of the glory of God. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." And what in this state of distance and of darkness throws such a lustre round the character of the faithful, and gives them something of the warmth and affection, the purity and zeal of angels? It is the closeness with which they cultivate communion with God, and the displays which he gives them of his glory. He brings them near unto himself, even to his seat, and makes all his goodness pass before them. He lifts upon them the light of his countenance, and shines into their hearts to give them the knowledge of his glory. They are then raised above what is low and grovelling, what is earthly and base, and made to shine in the beauties of holiness and abound in the fruits of righteousness. As the sun extracts the moisture from the ground, and the fire devours the dry wood and stubble, the presence of God and the manifestation of his glory blast the seeds of corruption, and consume the dross that cleaves to our souls. They calm our passions, sweeten our tempers, purify our principles, elevate our views, refine our desires, expand our affections, lift the mind above all that is mean

and unworthy, fix it on things substantial and permanent; they convey a sight and a hold of heaven, and give us a fellowship with angels and a resemblance to God.

How grand and interesting is the scene, when privileged to see a Christian retiring from his closet, or descending from the mount of ordinances, where he has enjoyed real inward sensible communion with God! There is a warmth, a sublimity, and tenderness in the whole of his language, looks, and deportment, that indicate the more than mortal joys to which he has been admitted, and afford some idea of the appearance which he shall possess when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible shall be clothed with incorruption. If he is a minister, he feeds with affection and diligence the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made him an overseer. If he is a private Christian, he discharges with activity and cheerfulness every duty attached to his station. Grace sweetens and sanctifies his conversation, and infuses something of the spirituality and benevolence of heaven into the whole of his intercourse with his domestic circle, and the world at large.

On descending from the mountain where he had been blessed with the vision of God, the face of Moses shone so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold him. The intercourse which Stephen enjoyed with his Saviour, not only diffused a heavenly serenity through his soul, but gave a celestial dignity and composure to his appearance. "All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as if it had been the face

of an angel." The endeared and ennobling fellowship to which Jesus admitted his disciples, left an impression on their manners which was not effaced till their dying day. It forced itself upon the reluctant attention of the rulers, the elders, and the scribes. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Near and intimate communion with God, still possesses a transforming efficacy. It makes us drink into the Spirit of Christ, and acquire his temper. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

If, therefore, you value what is sublime and noble, if you wish to derive any advantage from the ordinances of grace, or covet what will give dignity to your minds and purity and peace to your hearts, make the prayer of Moses your own; in every religious exercise strive to realize the divine presence, and labour daily, and all day long, to live in the fear and love of God, looking for the blessed hope, and longing for the glorious appearing of the great God your Saviour Jesus Christ.

SERMON IV.

THE DIGNITY AND USE OF THE MINISTRY.

1 COR. iii. 5.

“ Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”

IN religion, the Lord Jesus Christ is all in all; and the substance and essence of practical Christianity consist in renouncing every thing for his sake, and in making him all our salvation and all our desire. From the moment that the soul receives and rests on him entirely for righteousness and strength, however low the opinion that we entertain of our knowledge, or abilities, or attainments, from that moment we are safe. But if Christ is overlooked or undervalued, though we were possessed of the knowledge of an apostle, the science of a Newton, or the virtue of a heathen sage, we are in a state of condemnation and wrath. “ There is salvation in no other. He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son hath not life.”

Instead, however, of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as the only ground of their acceptance before God and

the only source of their happiness and joy, multitudes give themselves no concern about him or the blessings of his grace. Some will not enter his house, nor approach his presence. And among those who occasionally enter his courts, and attend upon the preaching of the word, some pay no regard to the message of reconciliation and mercy, but occupy themselves about the character of the preacher and the manner in which he delivers his tidings. Pestilence is advancing. The sovereign in his great humanity despatches heralds to warn his subjects of its approach, and direct them how they may most successfully escape its attacks. But the people, reckless of his counsels, spend their time in criticising the language, appearance, and manners of the royal messengers. An enemy has landed on the coast. Instructions are forwarded to put the people on their defence, and enable them to carry off their families and property to a place of safety. But they neglect these admonitions, and display their ingenuity in their remarks upon the style in which the warning was expressed, and the apparent direction in which the officers were travelling. The deluge was coming. Noah appeared for the last time amongst the antediluvians, to invite those who were willing to come with him into the refuge which God had provided, and to bid the rest a long farewell. But, instead of accepting his precious invitation, some of them, in the midst of their drinking and dancing, laughed at his agitation and alarm, and others amused themselves at the vehement and impassioned style in which he spoke,

When Christ ascended on high, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. But instead of improving the ministry for their conversion, edification, and salvation, what is the employment of some of the hearers of the gospel? They are debating which minister reasons best, which speaks most eloquently, and which shows the greatest learning; but, in the meantime, they overlook the message, forget the grand design for which preaching was appointed, and by their criminal apathy, allow their souls to remain in a state of moral starvation, and sink into everlasting ruin.

This was the case with some at Corinth. While the ministers of Christ were labouring to subdue all to the obedience of the faith, that they might be saved in the day of the Lord, some of the empty and idle professors were extolling Paul to the prejudice of Apollos, and others were lauding Apollos to the disadvantage of Paul.

The text leads us to take notice of the great design of the Christian ministry. This is to lead our hearers to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every office has its particular duties. The business of a soldier is to defend his country. The object of a teacher is to instruct his pupils. The function of a king is to secure the safety, and promote the welfare of his subjects. The work of the minister is to lead his people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And can any honour be more exalted, or any office

more important and interesting! For who is Christ? on earth he appeared as a mean, helpless, and friendless man. But was this the whole height of his dignity? and did he really possess nothing more august and sacred than what appeared in his outward form? In himself he is higher than the highest. Before him seraphim and cherubim are infinitely lower than the meanest reptile is beneath the most exalted of the celestial hosts. The heavens are high, and creation is wide. But the heavens in their height, and creation in its breadth, can give us no idea of his elevation, nor any representation of his immensity. The universe was formed by his power, and is upheld by his hand. Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. He is in all, and through all, and over all.

This is the great, the exalted, the glorious Being in whose service we labour, and whose greatness and grace we are commanded to proclaim. There is something sublime and sacred in all the works of God. By rational creatures, the productions of almighty power and infinite wisdom and goodness ought always to be contemplated with feelings bordering upon veneration and devotion. With what profound and adoring reverence, then, should we approach the gospel, and speak of the person and works of Immanuel, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; who is God over all, and blessed for ever?

For the honour and privilege of preaching Christ and him crucified, Gabriel might well resign his harp and all the grandeur and bliss of the world of light and love.

For the honour and privilege of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, the angel who shall awake the dead might gladly lay down the trump of God.

Who, then, among the sons of Adam, is sufficient for these things? Instead of censure, criticism, and harshness, when we appear among you, brethren, we need your sympathy and prayers. We stand up among you to preach Christ, and persuade you to be reconciled to God through him. And if great fear is due unto God in the meeting of his saints; if solemnity and humility were necessary in approaching the ark of the covenant: if Uzzah was struck dead for his rash and unwarranted touch, with what reverence and awe ought we to proceed when we are dealing with souls, and preaching salvation through the cross of Christ? Will a nurse act with caution when intrusted with the heir of the honours of a long line of royal ancestors, who concentrates the fondest hopes of a mighty nation? Did Mary respect the sacred flesh of the infant Saviour? did Simeon with rapture throw his aged arms around the blessed body of our Lord? O then, with what profound awe and adoring reverence ought we to preach and hear of Christ and him crucified?

Every verse of the Bible is sacred, because it testifies of Jesus and leads the soul to a knowledge of him and his undertaking. Every inch of the sanctuary is holy ground, because the Lord is in his temple, and there he displays the riches of his grace and the glories of his person. And every sentence in a gospel sermon is pre-

cious, because it is connected with the person and work of Immanuel, and is fitted or intended to give us more clear and impressive views of his glory and his grace.

“But when we can neither see Christ’s person, nor hear his voice, how is it possible that in listening to the gospel we can be said to hearken to himself? that by receiving his word we can receive him? and that by neglecting the calls and invitations of redeeming love, we reject himself? If the heavens should open, and the Son of Man descend in visible majesty; if at his presence the mountains should smoke, and the strong foundations of the earth should tremble; if he should lift up his voice to the skies, and in sounds equal to those which shook the rocks of Sinai, proclaim his message of reconciliation, then we would be awed into obedience and submit with reverence to his authority. If even a messenger were despatched from the regions of bliss, in robes of light and with wings of flame, we would treat him as a representative of Deity, and submissively yield to his mandates. But when we are addressed by men with whose faces we are familiar, and whom we often meet in the ordinary walks of life; by men of like passions, and labouring under similar infirmities as ourselves; how can we regard them as the messengers of Christ and the ambassadors of God? How can we bow to their words, as to the language of the Lord Jesus Christ? or incur the same responsibility for undervaluing or neglecting their labours, as for undervaluing or neglecting the labours of the Saviour of men?”

Is a proclamation from the sovereign of no authority, unless he announce it in person? Is an Act of Parliament destitute of force, unless the British senate itinerate the nation to make their statutes known? And unless the Lord Jesus Christ appear in person, has he no means of publishing his pleasure, and binding our consciences to receive and observe his injunctions?

Did the Hebrews see God, when he said, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected *me*, that I should not reign over them?" Did they hear him personally addressing them, when he said, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways?" Was his arm literally extended, loaded with benefits, when Paul inquired, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Was Jehovah speaking to them with his own lips, when he said, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh?"

When we stand up among you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, in obedience to his command, direct to you the truths contained in his word, our message is possessed of the same authority and force as if it were delivered by himself. We may utter it infinitely more feebly and imperfectly; but if it is founded on the pages of inspiration, and coincides with the dictates of the sacred oracles, it is endowed with the same truth

and certainty, the same authority and force, as if it were spoken by an apostle, or proclaimed by the Saviour in person. The contents of a letter are not affected by the rank of the bearer. An epistle from an absent friend conveys his mind as completely when put into my hands by a common porter, as if it had been brought by the commander of the British forces. And when a child says, Twice two are four—believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved—by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified; these declarations are as true as if they had been pronounced by an archangel.

And when we address you in obedience to the command of God, and in harmony with his word, our speech and preaching are entitled to the same reverence and regard, the same confidence and trust, as if they were pressed on your attention by God himself. Jesus is gone into heaven. He has sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, and there he must remain till the restitution of all things. Unless, therefore, faithful ministers, in preaching the everlasting gospel, are holding forth the Lord Jesus Christ in all the glories of his person, and in all the riches of his grace, why does he say to every individual to whom their proclamations are directed, “Look unto *me*, and be ye saved? Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden? Behold *I* stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, *I* will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with *me*?” Why are we commanded to preach the gospel among all nations for the

obedience of *faith*? For what is the first effect of faith? To receive the Lord Jesus Christ. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name.”

Unless, in the faithful preaching of the gospel, ministers bring the Lord Jesus near to their people, and hold him up to their faith and affection, how can he be said to be set forth crucified among them? and how can they who trifle with the gospel, and despise its precious blessings, be said not only to neglect the great salvation, but to crucify him afresh, and tread him under foot? Unless his ministers in the faithful preaching of his word are proclaiming the power, grace, and all-sufficiency of Immanuel, and entitled to the attention and regard of their audience, why has he identified our interests with his own, and declared, He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me? Why did he add, Go and teach all nations; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world? Has the world come to a close? or has Jesus forgotten his word? If the world is still rolling on in its course, and if Jesus is still faithful to his promise, then he is still with his servants; and it is at the peril of any man either to reject or disregard their testimony.

How grand and sacred is the office of the holy ministry! Who is sufficient for these things? Few know the importance or dignity of the gospel ministry. But when once the heart is right, and filled and warmed with love

to God and compassion for souls, no employment can be considered as more honourable and useful. Mr. Brown of Haddington had a correct idea of its mighty importance, when he declared that he would rather beg his bread through the week to have the privilege of preaching Christ on Sabbath, than live in a palace, and be restrained from preaching. Sir Henry Moncreiff's last words to Dr. Thomson were worthy of a veteran in the cause of Christ. "I shall never see my people again. I shall never preach to them more. But if I could, I would gladly creep on my hands and knees round the globe, to preach salvation through the cross." And a greater than either said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Now, if the preaching of Christ be such an honour, what a privilege is it to hear of him and of his salvation! Did the queen of Sheba travel from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon? With what deep anxiety and exulting joy should we press into the house of God, when a greater than Solomon is there? Rather than be deprived of the privilege of hearing of Christ and the wonders of his love, we should submit to undertake journeys far longer than the weary pilgrimages, and submit to greater expense and toil than the perilous adventures of the Covenanters, to enjoy the vast and invaluable benefit of hearing a single gospel sermon. Were God in his exuberant goodness to restore the

bloom and fertility of Eden, what a rush would there be from all quarters of the earth to taste the sweets and inhale the fragrance of that seat of bliss? But what were all the odours and beauty, the riches and luxuriance of Eden, compared with the peace and felicity, the dignity and delight of reconciliation to God through the Lord Jesus Christ? What is the world compared with the church? What is paradise when contemplated in connection with heaven? What was Adam, amidst his created majesty and grandeur, when beside the least and lowest in the family of the faithful, amidst the beauties of their renovated nature, and the honours and enjoyments of their gracious condition? Adam was of the earth, earthy. Believers are heavenly. Their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost; and their souls are a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now, all the blessedness and glory of redeeming mercy are brought to us by the gospel. The preacher may be weak and imperfect, but he proclaims glad tidings of unutterable joy. The vessel may be earthen, but the treasure in it is divine. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Now, how are Christ and the unsearchable riches of his grace to be attained? They are to be secured by faith, and by faith only. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned."

“ But what is faith? What is meant by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? Is this the same thing as to be honest and good, virtuous and sober? with attending ordinances, and doing the best that we can?”

To produce faith is the great design of the gospel ministry. If this has not been accomplished by my labours, your hearing has been in vain, and my preaching has been in vain. Ye are yet in your sins.

I. In faith there is always a degree of knowledge.

I do not undertake to fix the quantity of knowledge that must be possessed. But some knowledge is necessary: for, though a man may have a fancy about what he does not understand, till once he have some idea of its nature, believe it he cannot. In religion there are many things far surpassing created comprehension, such as the Trinity and the Divine perfections; but though we are unable to form a just conception of their essence and manner of subsisting, from the truth and faithfulness of God who has revealed them, we are convinced of their reality.

Most men take their religion upon trust. They think it enough to believe as their fathers believed, or as their neighbours believe. But though this may be sufficient to form Mahometans and pagans: is this hereditary or national faith enough for a Christian, who must give an account of himself unto God? who is commanded to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good? and is enjoined to be always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him?

In religion something more is necessary than mere speculative knowledge. There must be a dedication of the heart to God, and the consecration of all our faculties and powers to his interest and honour. And can any man be willing to make such a costly sacrifice, when he is backward to learn the principles of Christianity? Will a man labour all day in your employment when you cannot prevail on him to open the windows, that he may see? Will he climb the mountain top, when you cannot persuade him to lift up his eyes towards the palace which blazes on its summit? And will a professor toil in the painful and fatiguing path which leads to everlasting bliss, when we cannot induce him to study the description of the way, nor the account of the happiness and glory which lie beyond it? And when the means of information are so abundant, when the motives to acquire instruction are so numerous and powerful, the man who remains ignorant of the gospel, and takes his religion on trust, gives sad cause to tremble for his dreadful situation. He shows that he is trifling with his soul, and despising the great salvation. And how can that man be pressing into the kingdom of heaven? or exerting himself to lay hold on eternal life?

In a matter of such mighty and matchless importance a real Christian will leave nothing to uncertainty or chance. He must have clear and Scriptural ideas of the way of peace and safety, and he must possess satisfying and conclusive evidence of his own interest in the provisions of the gospel. If a man is anxious about the

issue of a litigation, or the result of a commercial adventure, what deep and intense solicitude must every believer feel for his eternal welfare? It is a wonder that any man can retain his reason, without having as plain and indisputable proof for his everlasting safety as for his existence.

But whilst the Christian is always a man of knowledge, who takes care to study and understand the truth, we must also observe—

II. That he believes its reality.

The fancies of the poet, and the tales and fictions of the novelist, may be all intelligible; and the reader may understand them thoroughly without believing a single sentence of the whole. The doctrines and narratives of Scripture are all true. The Christian not only labours to comprehend them, but he is also persuaded of their absolute certainty and infinite importance. He believes and is sure that the things stated in the Bible are exactly such as they are represented. He was not in paradise. He did not hear the sentence of condemnation. He did not witness the expulsion from Eden, nor see the guard of cherubim and flaming sword planted to keep the way of the tree of life. But he knows that man is a fallen and apostate creature upon the authority of the oracles of God; and he finds that every sentence of the sacred volume, on our sinfulness and depravity, is corroborated by the testimony of his own reason and conscience. He did not see the Word made flesh. He did not follow the incarnate Redeemer. He did not listen to his public

sermons nor private discourses. He did not accompany him without the gates of Jerusalem, see him affixed to the bloody tree, witness his dying agonies, nor hear the last sentences of compassion and tenderness which he uttered. But on the authority of the God of truth he knows that they are as real as if he had been present and witnessed the whole in person. He knows that he himself must be born again—that he must believe on Christ—and that on believing, his sins shall be blotted out, and he shall be blessed with the salvation of his soul. The trumpet has not yet sounded. The graves have not yet surrendered their ancient charge. The great white throne has not descended, but he knows, on the word of him that made him, that the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and every man shall receive according to the deeds done in the body.

We must add that, along with a belief of the reality of what the Bible contains, the Christian

3. Receives and rests on Christ alone for the salvation of his soul.

This is the turning point in religion. Each of us has a soul, and its everlasting condition depends upon the treatment which we give to the adorable Redeemer. If we receive and rest on him for our salvation, we are safe; but if we reject or neglect him, we are undone for ever.

Our eternal state will not be decided by our arguing and reasoning about orthodoxy and error; by our debates and contentions about doctrines and duties, nor even by our study of the gospel, and our assent to its

reality. If the gospel were merely a system of abstract truths, like the rules in arithmetic, or the propositions in geometry, it would be perfectly sufficient to understand what it contains, and acquiesce in the certainty of what it reveals. If the fall had entailed no other calamity on our race than a little darkness upon our understandings, and error in our opinions, then all that would have been requisite to counteract the evils of our apostacy would have been the removal of our ignorance, and the communication of larger and clearer knowledge of things divine. But since the most tremendous calamity which the fall has inflicted is the corruption of our natures, and the depravity of our hearts, since the very strength and essence of our misery consist in the perversity and wickedness of our affections, what will it avail us to have our judgments corrected, and our understandings enlightened, while the heart remains a mass of corruption and filth, and continues to pour out its pollution and impurity upon the life and conversation? Can a diseased body be cured by placing it in an apartment possessed of more light? Can you restore a broken bone to its former strength by the power of music? And can a sin-sick soul be healed of its spiritual maladies, or a depraved heart delivered from its corruption and hardness, by talking and reasoning about religion, or assenting to the truths of revelation?

In order to derive any saving benefit from the gospel, there must be such an assent to the truths which it contains as will lead us to prefer Jesus to our chief joy—to

lean on his righteousness—to glory in his atonement—to apply and use his grace—to delight in him with our whole heart—to court his presence and live to his praise. Unless this is the case, why do the scriptures speak of faith not only as a belief of the truth, but also as a coming to Christ, a fleeing to him, a laying hold of him? These figures imply far more than a mere knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and a conviction of their truth. They intimate that there is something in faith far more deep and penetrating, which goes nearer to the heart, and more deeply and powerfully affects and interests the soul. They necessarily lead us to conclude, that the faith which saves the soul compels us actually to renounce all for the sake of Christ, to rest on him and trust in him for the salvation of our souls. A strong tower cannot shelter any from their foes who merely know its height and strength, but refuse to enter it. The cities of refuge could not protect from the avenger of blood any manslayer, who knew its situation and remained without its walls. Unless Noah and his family had gone on board the ark, their knowledge of its capacity and strength never could have preserved them from the waters of the deluge. And though we should acquire the knowledge of men and of angels, what can this profit us unless we are brought to trust in Christ, to rest on him, and embrace him as our own saviour?

The same inference may be drawn from the effects ascribed to faith. It leads to a covenant relation with the Lord. Believers say—Come, and let us join our-

selves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant. It forms a marriage union betwixt the soul and Christ. Believers are married to the Lord. The church is his spouse. And to every christian we can say, Thy Maker is thy husband. But can such a relation be formed by the parties merely believing in each other's existence, or possessing an acquaintance with their history and character?

Faith changes our nature, takes away the hearts of stone, and makes us to grow up in all things to him who is our head. But can this be accomplished by a bare knowledge of the truth, and a simple assent to the doctrine of revelation? To produce these sublime and blessed results, there must not only be a knowledge and belief of the doctrines of Christianity, but also a discovery of their importance and excellence, their grandeur and glory. The soul must embrace the Saviour whom they reveal, rest on him, cleave to him, and make him all its salvation, and all its desire.

SERMON V.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS iii. 8.

“ Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I HAVE been told, that when the father of the late Dr. Erskine remonstrated with him against his devoting himself to the study of divinity, and urged that it would be a disgrace to the family to have the eldest son and heir become a preacher, the youth replied that God had only one Son, and he thought it no disgrace to him to see his Son become a preacher. The Doctor was right in his choice. It is long since he entered the world of glory; and it must be a cause of everlasting rejoicing that he had the honour and privilege of preaching Christ and him crucified. Paul regarded it as his highest distinction to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ is an employment which would confer

unbounded honour on the most exalted of the hosts of heaven. How astonishing that on the children of the dust, the corrupt descendants of fallen Adam, this grace and dignity should be bestowed to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ! His riches far surpass all human description and created comprehension. But the little portion of his treasures which our feeble minds can admit, forms a never-failing subject of delightful and elevating contemplation.

We may consider his riches as either essential or official, as inherent in his own nature, or connected with his mediatorial undertaking.

Let us consider—

I. His inherent or essential riches.

These consist in his divine attributes and excellences.

Jesus, whom you believers love, and on whom your souls rely for their present peace and everlasting salvation, is a wonderful person. He is God as well as man. He was set up from of old, from everlasting. He is the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. He and his Father are one. In knowledge, dominion, power, and blessedness, he possesses an equality with the Father. He is God over all, and blessed for ever. Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.

It is easy to utter the words, "Jesus is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his

person; he is God over all, and blessed for ever." But is it easy to understand what is included in these mighty and astonishing words? To comprehend the full amount of one attribute in the divine nature will through eternity baffle the most strenuous efforts of the highest angels of heaven. The dust of the earth may be counted, the path of the sun may be measured, and the weight of the world may be told. But canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? His wisdom is unerring; his faithfulness unchanging; his goodness unbounded; his power irresistible; his understanding unsearchable; and his treasures immense and inexhaustible. Who laid the foundations of the earth? Who stretched out the heavens as a curtain? Who balanced the vast systems dependent on their respective suns? and with such regularity and steadiness conducts their splendid and majestic march along the trackless fields of space? Who has covered them with their mantle of beauty? planted them with the various inhabitants which they contain? and furnished all the different creatures with the means of their activity and sources of their delight and enjoyment?

To these, and to a thousand similar questions, only one answer can be returned. These are the works of the sufferer of Calvary. These are the productions of him who endured the cross. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. By him were all things created that are in heaven, and in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or

powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

It is no easy matter to survey the contents of a single planet. It requires years to sail round the world which we occupy. The life of man is too short to explore the wonders of the hoary deep, and the treasures enclosed within the recesses of the everlasting hills. Science has not yet mastered all the properties of light and air, nor discovered the diversified productions of the vegetable and animal tribes. But what is the earth to the solar system! and what are the sun and surrounding planets compared with the universe!

But remember that the capacities of Emmanuel will far surpass the works of his hands. All that the eye sees—all that the sky embraces—heaven with all its glory, and the wide universe with all its load of worlds; so far from being the measure of his strength, are a mere specimen of his power, and when compared with the full amount of his might, are no more than a drop in the ocean, or a grain of dust to the globe. I know not what Omnipotence means; but I know that an Almighty Being can as easily form a system, and plant a sun in its centre, as create a blade of grass, or line with down an insect's wing. In a moment and with ease Jesus could enlarge the bounds of the creation, or supersede it by another universe still more stupendous and magnificent. Every movement of his will carries along with it all the energies of Deity, and can plant in the depths of immensity suns and systems more vast and mighty than any with

which he has already encompassed his throne. For he can do all things, neither is there any thing too hard for him.

So much for the inherent riches of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are essential to his nature, and inseparable from his existence. They are unchangeable and eternal. They are incapable of increase or diminution. Though man had never fallen—though neither sun, moon, nor stars had been brought into being—though the courts of heaven never had been trodden by an angel of light; Jesus would have possessed all these riches in the whole of their ineffable infinite amplitude. Creation has added nothing to their amount. Sin can neither destroy nor impair their immense and inconceivable plenitude: time cannot augment them: eternity cannot diminish them. While he exists, he is essentially, immutably the same. He fills space; inhabits eternity; and is from everlasting to everlasting God.

These riches are the source of angelic joy, the delight of the holy part of creation, and the inexhaustible fountain of his own infinite and unchanging blessedness and glory. And it is from them, as their origin and spring, that all those blessings flow which fill and feast the hearts of believers on earth, and spread such a fulness of joy and peace around their pure and perfect state in heaven.

There is another view of the subject equally sublime and interesting, which we are honoured to take. This is

II. His official or mediatorial riches.

It is in these that we are most deeply interested. He is

essential riches, though absolutely necessary to his mediatorial riches, are utterly incommunicable. They are inherent in his own nature, and invariably the same. But his mediatorial riches he possesses for the benefit of his people; and from them he continues to pour out upon the subjects of saving mercy according to the extent of their necessities, and according to what he knows will be most conducive to their present and eternal welfare.

Because his office of Mediator is new, some imagine that his personal riches are inherent in him as God, and his mediatorial riches are essential to him as man. They restrict his personal riches to his divine, and his official riches to his human nature. But though there is a wide difference betwixt his essential and mediatorial riches, since the one was possessed from everlasting, and exercised towards pure and holy beings; and the other only recently displayed and manifested towards fallen and guilty creatures: the divine and human natures in all their fulness and perfection were equally necessary to fit him for his mediatorial work, and when once united, become alike inseparable from his person.

The interests which, as Mediator, he was required to manage, are so vast, complicated, and difficult, that nothing less than an infinite and almighty being is able to sustain their weight, and conduct them with honour and success.

The objects of his redeeming love form a multitude which no man can number. Each of us is labouring

under multiplied and extensive wants. Considered in itself the soul possesses large and vigorous powers; for it was originally formed in the image of its Maker, and demands the noblest objects to employ its faculties, and the most large and copious resources to fill and satisfy its capacities and desires. As sinners we are oppressed with more numerous and urgent wants. We are guilty, and need pardon; polluted, and require cleansing; depraved, and in want of the renovation of our natures; ignorant, and require the illumination of the Holy Ghost to remove our darkness, and render us light in the Lord; weak, and need Almighty strength to sustain us under our trials, and preserve us safe amidst our foes. We are indigent, and stores of inexhaustible grace are necessary to dignify our characters with heavenly principles and enrich our souls with spiritual blessings. As citizens of Zion, and members of the household of faith, our elevated rank and benevolent dispositions multiply and enlarge our wants by leading us to take a more deep and lively interest in the worth and welfare of all who live, and to labour more actively and earnestly for the advancement of the cause of godliness and the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness and peace over all the earth.

Now, who but a divine person is sufficient for these things? When the people for whom he interposed constitute a multitude which no man can number, and each is burdened with an infinite load of guilt and ungodliness, who, without the divinity dwelling within

him, could give to his single sacrifice a boundless value, and by one offering for ever perfect them that are sanctified? When all are dead in trespasses and sins, and the whole soul is rankling and festering under the virulence of depravity and vice, who, without divine strength, is able to renew every believer in the spirit of his mind, to write the law of God upon his heart, and make him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? When their capacities are so large, their exigencies so numerous, and such multitudes of poor indigent petitioners are perpetually besieging the throne of mercy, without omniscience how could he hear every prayer, and redress every injury; and without the command of creation, and the disposal of the resources of Deity, how could he supply every want, and make the whole ransomed church exceedingly and eternally glad in the riches of his grace and the overflowings of his munificence? When his people are so widely scattered over the world, and placed in such very different circumstances, unless he is omnipresent, how could he encamp round every saint, witness all his wrongs, and encompass him with the shield of his protection and the strength of his arm? And unless his hand grasps the elements of nature and wields the energies of omnipotence, how could he make every thing work together for their good, defend them from every foe, render them more than conquerors, convert the Jews, bring in the fulness of the Gentiles, fill the earth with his glory, raise the dead, and introduce the ransomed into an eternity of bliss and joy in heaven?

Who, I ask, is sufficient for these things? If you overburden the carriage, it breaks down. If you overload the vessel, it sinks. If you exact from a man more service than he can render, his strength fails and your expectations are frustrated. And if a creature had been employed to perform the work of Deity, perplexed, baffled, embarrassed, and overcome by the mighty and unmanageable task, he would have sunk beneath the vast commission, and wrecked the whole stupendous and marvellous concerns intrusted to his charge.

But look at the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and say how richly, how thoroughly he was accomplished for the matchless but perilous undertaking! Dangers the most formidable, and difficulties the most insurmountable, frowned around his path. The claims of a broken law, the terrors of offended justice, and the wrath of an insulted God, in dreadful array gathered about his career. But grasping in his hands the energies of omnipotence, and furnished with all the resources of Deity, he resolutely encountered and nobly triumphed over the fiercest and most appalling of them all. Whatever may be the want, the weakness, the peril, or trouble by which we are harassed and annoyed, from this he can easily relieve us. And whatever may be the benefit or blessing, the honour or privilege, which we can desire or enjoy, the immense and ineffable extent of his mediatorial riches enables him instantly and fully to impart.

Are we deeply in debt to the law, and justly exposed

to all the horrors of everlasting condemnation? Here is an inexhaustible fund of merit to make reconciliation for the transgressors, and justify the ungodly. God hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. As God, Jesus was above the law, and had no obligations of his own to fulfil. As man, he placed himself under the law, and rendered himself capable of obeying and suffering. As God and man, the indwelling divinity gave to his temporary obedience and sufferings an infinite value, so that he has magnified the law, and made it honourable. He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin, brought in everlasting righteousness, and for ever perfected them that are sanctified. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?

Are we criminal and guilty? He possesses unsearchable riches of grace, to blot out the hand-writing that is against us, and bestow free forgiveness upon the most vile and unworthy. He is exalted a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins. He is able to save to the utmost, and his blood cleanseth from all sin.

Are we dead in trespasses and sins? He is able to communicate spiritual life and vigour to the most diseased and dead in all the ranks of vice and rebellion. As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. He has

power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him.

Are we filthy and polluted? Here are unsearchable treasures of grace and virtue to purify the defiled, and sanctify the unholy. He can sanctify us wholly, and preserve our whole soul, body, and spirit faultless to his kingdom and glory. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctify to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?

Are we foolish and deceived? He can dissipate our darkness and remove our ignorance. In him is life, and the life is the light of men. He can change our darkness into day, and make us light in the Lord. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. His children are all taught of him; and he gives them an unction from the Holy One, and they know all things.

Are we feeble and helpless?—encompassed with many infirmities, and exposed to many resolute and inveterate foes? Here are unfailing supplies of strength to support us in weakness, and defend us against every adversary and enemy. He has all power in heaven and in earth; and is able to subdue even all things to himself. He can make his grace sufficient for us, and perfect his strength in our weakness. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord,

and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thrash the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

Are we poor and indigent, and labouring under multiplied and painful wants? Here are riches sufficient to replenish the universe, and leave an infinite reversion behind. The stores of nature, the bounties of providence, the riches of redeeming mercy, and the treasures of eternal glory are all in his hand, and freely bestowed on every one that asks them. With the wealth of ten thousand worlds perpetually circulating round his throne, and all the fulness of the godhead at his disposal, what good thing can he withhold from them that love him? Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.

Are you solicitous for the success of religion, and the prevalence of peace and piety over all the earth? Here are unsearchable riches of enlightening, converting, and saving influences. He has already sprinkled many nations, and brought multitudes to the obedience of the faith. Still the residue of the Spirit is with him, and he will never suspend the exercise of his transforming soul-subduing power, till all the ends of the earth see his salvation, and the whole world be filled with his glory.

Are we agitated and alarmed by the troubles of life, and afraid of death and judgment? Here is an inexhaustible fund of encouragement and consolation. Jesus Christ is Lord of all, and under his almighty and

universal reign every incident shall be made subservient to the benefit of his people; and events the most gloomy and distressing shall work together for your good. He is mighty, and will plead your cause. He will contend with those who contend with you; and all that are incensed against you shall be destroyed. He is the resurrection and the life. He has the keys of hell and of death. He will ransom you from death, and redeem you from the power of the grave. Where he is, there shall you also be. He will show you the path of life: in his presence is fulness of joy: at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

Since to the vilest and most unworthy of all the children of Adam we are commanded to proclaim the gospel, and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, if any live in indigence, and plunge into the horrors of a wretched and ruined eternity, it is the effect of their own infatuation, madness, and depravity. Their destruction is of themselves.

Let as many as know the grace of Christ, learn to live upon his fulness. Improve your invaluable, your unspeakable privileges. You are not straitened in him. He gives you freely, and upbraids not; convert your matchless advantages into your present benefit; gather

around you more and more of his precious treasures, and live upon these inexhaustible supplies till you see him as he is, and be made exceedingly and eternally glad in the light of his countenance, and in the full possession of his presence and love.

SERMON VI.

THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

MATT. v. 44.

“ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

MANY admire valour and prowess. They would have travelled far to have witnessed the conflict betwixt David and Goliath. They would have rejoiced if they could have met in single combat a murderous Hazael or blaspheming Rabshakeh, and laid breathless at their feet these haughty ruffians and wholesale oppressors of their race.

Christianity trains its subjects to harder contests. It summons us to a field where more momentous interests are at stake than the independence of nations, and where more blissful victories are gained, and laurels more unwithering are won than kings and conquerors can gather from martial strife. It calls us to subdue our pride and passions; to suppress our resentment and wrath; to

maintain unshaken serenity in our own breasts, and convert our foes into friends. It requires us to love our enemies ; to bless them that curse us ; to do good to them that hate us ; to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us ; not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

In this wicked world trials of our temper are perpetually occurring. Enemies arise in every quarter, and injuries are heaped on the heads of the most innocent and worthy. Through the stupidity of the ignorant our best deeds are misunderstood ; and, though undesignedly, are most grossly and vexatiously distorted. Through the bitterness and insolence of rivals and opponents, our generous designs are decried or vilified, and our slight defects or failings deliberately and most unmercifully magnified. And, through the rancour and malignity of the malicious and envious, our purest intentions and most benevolent labours are misrepresented and perverted ; and clothed in such a dress as must, in circles where our real character is unknown, render us the objects of aversion and horror. It is long since enmity was placed betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent ; but though ages have elapsed since the warfare commenced, the fury of hostilities has not declined. A deeper shade of hatred settles on the brow, and a spirit of more stern and stubborn ferocity collects around the heart of the combatants on Satan's side, in proportion as time flows past, and they find that their fortifications are shaking and tumbling beneath them. As it was in the

beginning, so it is now; he that is born after the flesh persecuteth him that is born after the spirit. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and in our day, as well as in the time of the apostles, it is only through much tribulation that we can enter the kingdom.

When suffering from calumny and slander, from injustice and violence, we naturally feel indignant; and in the first impulse of irritated and wounded feeling, we would gladly retaliate our wrongs upon the head of their author, and subject him to a double measure of the evil which he has inflicted. Accordingly, among irreligious men, one insult or injury is no sooner committed, than it is repaid by another; and thus, when once discord and contention arise they become interminable, and the longer that they last, they are prosecuted with the greater asperity and virulence.

It is against this base and odious spirit of resentment and revenge, of malignity and implacability, which has laid many a heart in desolation and wretchedness, and created such awful mischief and misery amongst the individuals and families of our race, that our text and some of the strongest declarations of the sacred volume are directed. Whilst the Scriptures allow and command us by every mild and honourable measure to assert our personal rights and defend our civil and religious privileges, they enjoin us to do all with meekness and gentleness. They require us to preserve the mastery over our own spirits, and to seek the improvement and welfare of our

adversary and enemy. They peremptorily prohibit every degree of resentment and revenge, and enjoin us, under the most annoying and harassing provocation that we can encounter, to possess our souls in patience, and to recompense to no man evil for evil.

It is against the monstrous and horrid sin of implacability and revenge that I now address you. Against this I must entreat you to carry on the most determined and unyielding hostility. If baffled and overcome, the consequences will be most shameful and disastrous. But if successful, the results will be most delightful and honourable. It will diffuse a blessed satisfaction through your mind, and cover your character with a majesty and lustre which will acquire fresh beauty and grandeur when the fairest on earth shall vanish, and the firmest in creation shall melt away.

Defeat is most shameful and disastrous.

Nothing is more troublesome and pitiable than the babbling and blundering imbecility of ignorance and stupidity, which, incapable of understanding the nature or perceiving the value of our most enlightened sentiments and noblest performances, pours a mutilated and false report of our conduct into the malignant ear of prejudice and enmity. And nothing is more odious and irksome than the studied perversions and foul inventions of jealousy and hatred, and the wanton aggressions and endless annoyances of injustice and violence. The men who labour under the power of these base

principles, are among the most infamous and detestable, the most vile and mischievous of our race.

Now, by retaliating the injuries which you receive, can you secure the benefit of your opponent, add to your intellectual dignity, or recommend your principles to the world at large? By rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing; by bursting out in a tempest of indignation against the man who has stunned you with a storm of passion: by wreaking on the head of the contentious, and resentful the endless and teasing molestations with which they have been striving to harass and torment you; by giving place to emotions of dislike or of revenge, you descend from the high and lovely elevation to which the faith and hope of the gospel had raised you, to the low and filthy level which your opponents occupy; you identify yourselves with them in the meanest and basest of their spirit, and in the most revolting and criminal part of their conduct.

And is this wise or safe? If another man make himself ridiculous by floundering in the mire, will you improve your appearance by plunging into the same puddle? If our adversary or enemy render himself obnoxious to God, and disgusting to man, by violating the laws of justice and kindness, can we act a right and a rational part by breaking through, in our turn, the restraints of reason and religion, and embodying in our own persons the worst passions and the vilest tempers that pollute and degrade his character? When a man madly lays waste his fields, will it either demonstrate our sanity, or aug-

ment our resources, to desolate the richest and most lovely of our possessions? And when another, by the indulgence of irritable or vindictive feelings, is reducing his soul to a moral waste, will it adorn or elevate our condition to allow the same fatal devastation to pass over the garden of our graces? Because our enemy has made himself a child of the devil, and an abhorrence to all flesh, are we, by imitating his example, to match him in disgrace and misery, and rank ourselves with the meanest that this earth possesses, and the basest that the creation contains?

However troublesome and teasing, irksome and odious injuries may be, the injurious is a thousand times more pitiable and wretched than the injured.

The injured can derive the most solid and lasting advantages from the injustice and violence of his adversary. When he meekly and patiently sustains his trials—when he permits none of the offensive and galling treatment which he encounters to disturb the serenity of his mind, or interrupt the mild and steady career of his piety and beneficence—when he cordially forgives his enemies, and in the warmth of affectionate compassion, and the importunity of fervent prayer, implores their reconciliation to God, and the descent of the Divine blessing on their head; and when, rising superior to the provocation and abuse which he experiences, he converts all the hatred and outrage of his foes into an occasion for still greater activity and zeal in the cause of religion and humanity, and still more strenuous and persevering efforts for the

present and eternal welfare of those who assault and annoy him, this man is associated with the family of Jesus. He draws around him the esteem and admiration of the wise and the good. He brings down the protection and blessing of Him, who is the shield of the helpless, and the refuge of the oppressed. He shows that he is allied to Him, who, when reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, threatened not. He serves himself heir to all the blessings pronounced on the peacemakers, on them who are persecuted for righteousness, and who have the privilege not only of believing on the name of Christ, but also of suffering for his sake. And when the heavens and the earth have passed away, he shall raise his head high among them who are more than conquerors, and who, instead of being overcome of evil, overcome evil with good.

But where do the haughty and overbearing, the proud and resentful take their station? They exclude themselves from the society and blessedness of the faithful and loyal subjects of the Most High. They display a temper the reverse of his who prayed for his murderers, and died for the redemption of his enemies. They prove that they are of their father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, and who still delights in the promotion of rancour and discord, of violence and bloodshed. And by ranging themselves in direct opposition to Him who does good to the evil and unthankful, and who commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, they place themselves under the ban of heaven, and expose themselves to all

the horrors of him who shall have judgment without mercy, because he showed no mercy.

If, therefore, the feverish patient be a greater object of pity than his wearied and worn-out nurse, and the man in the height of delirium be a greater sufferer than his fatigued and exhausted keeper, how far does the wretchedness of the proud and peevish, the irascible and revengeful, surpass that of the victims of his grossest rudeness and most fell and rancorous ferocity? From him who bears them with meekness and resignation they will soon pass away. They are included in the comprehensive list of the "all things" which work together for good to them that love God. They will speedily yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and ere long be succeeded by an eternity of joy. But what are the fruits which pride and insolence, wrath and malevolence yield? When will these foul and pernicious principles bring to their possessor any advantage or honour? They embitter his peace, and destroy his happiness. If he possessed any better or nobler principles, they are gradually weakened and undermined till they are utterly annihilated. Like the judgment-stricken plains where the devoted cities stood, he is abandoned to utter barrenness. He frustrates the high and beneficent purpose of his creation. He proves a disgrace to humanity, and a pest to society. And by disturbing the peace, and trampling on the rights of those whom he was bound to love and cherish, he raises against himself the indignation of the Almighty, and accumulates for himself

a more dreadful amount of vengeance in the day of righteous retribution.

Give his most furious and inexorable foe the power to concentrate into one all that is awful and horrid in the state of a ruined immortal, his adversary and enemy could not heap on his head a more tremendous doom than just to leave him to the unbridled power of those irascible emotions which he spontaneously cherishes, and the natural tendency of those vindictive passions which he so dearly loves. This would be to deliver him over to a reprobate mind. This would be to fix him in the ranks of the outlaws from the protection of the Eternal, and leave him to fill up the cup of his iniquity till wrath come upon him to the utmost.

Now, have you escaped this most awful and deplorable fate? Have you been reconciled unto God by the death of his Son? Are you joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, baptized with the Holy Ghost, and made heirs of the kingdom of heaven? And shall you regret that your enemy is screened from the chastisement of your little arm? and that by the laws of our holy religion, you are prohibited from avenging yourselves? When your foe is in the fangs of a gigantic serpent, are you to fret that you cannot reach him to augment his pain by your petty and malicious scratches? When he is enveloped in the flames of a volcano, are you to repine that you cannot approach him to increase his sufferings by the application of your little torch or taper? And when your adversaries are writhing in the grasp of the

old serpent, and by their lawless tempers and unchristian deeds have kindled around them the flames of divine indignation, are you to grieve that you are interdicted from annoying them with your puny sting? and debarred from attempting to harass them with the tiny fires of your displeasure or revenge?

Instead of grieving that you are discharged from treading this destructive ground, and teasing your miserable tormentor in such dangerous circumstances, with your whole heart and soul bless the God of grace, who in rich, in infinite mercy, has delivered you from such an overwhelming doom. Pity, pity your enemy. Labour, strive, and pray for his recovery. Keep not silence, and give the Lord no rest, till he extend that mercy to him which he has so unexpectedly vouchsafed to you.

Do you delight to impart instruction to the ignorant? Would you rejoice to free the sick from their maladies, and relieve the insane from their sufferings? And when you see a fellow immortal, by the strength and virulence of his bad tempers and furious passions, provoking the judgments of the Almighty, and entailing on himself all the horrors of never-ending wo, will you refuse to employ any measures which the God of love has put in your power to rouse him to a sense of his perilous situation, and rescue him from his awful fate? If there be any consolation in Christ, if any bowels and mercies, hasten to his aid; arrest him in his flight from God and goodness, and never abandon your benevolent exertions

till you have reached his heart, and subdued him to the obedience of the faith. He that winneth souls is wise. No matter whose soul is in jeopardy. Whether it be that of a friend or of a foe, remember that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. The irritation or antipathy of one Hottentot or Malay against another, does not exempt you from seeking the salvation of both. And because you are the object of the spite and enmity of a neighbour, does that cancel the obligation of the universal law of love, or release you from the necessity of exerting every effort to ensure his temporal and eternal welfare?

But while he is intrenched in pride and arrogance, steeled and hardened against you by prejudice and malice, how are you to reach his heart? to dislodge him from his fastnesses, and gain him over to the love and obedience of the gospel? Can this be accomplished by retorting on him the weapons which he throws? and striving to equal or surpass him in the conflict of passion and in the acrimony of invective and abuse? There are some substances, which instead of giving way to the hammer, become more compact and elastic by every succeeding stroke. But the most hard and refractory will generally yield, if subjected to the fire. And there are some minds which are roused into more stern and sturdy defiance, and lashed into more reckless and ungovernable fury by every appearance of resistance. But when other measures have failed, some of the most

stubborn and untractable hearts have been subdued and softened by the exercise of love, by a meek and patient endurance of evil, by a strength of mind which no violence can shake, a gentleness which no outrage can ruffle, a serenity which no annoyance can disturb, a magnanimity which bears all, forgives all, forgets all, and a generosity which, in proportion as it is repelled and scorned, glows with more melting tenderness, and follows its tormentor with more ardent and expansive kindness.

By healing the ear of Malchus, Jesus must have produced a far more reverential and kindly impression on his mind than if he had cut off his other ear, or laid his brother officers prostrate in the dust. The multiplied proofs which David had given of his loyalty and courage, were unable to secure him against the jealousy and enmity of Saul. Though he should have doubled his services, and outdone all his former deeds of intrepidity and patriotism, he could not have affected the spirit nor moderated the resentment of his suspicious and vindictive sovereign. But when, notwithstanding his repeated attempts to murder the son of Jesse, and all the perfidy and cruelty which he had shown him, Saul found that when David had him completely in his power, instead of exacting a just retribution for the wrongs which he had sustained, he had allowed him to go away in safety; the heart of the malignant monarch for once relented, and he addressed his magnanimous victim in the accents of affection and peace.

It is true that this compunction was only temporary.

But then, nothing else than this unexpected and unconquerable benignity could have produced even a momentary visitation of remorse. And your best and most strenuous exertions may sometimes prove abortive, yet if within the magazine of grace, there is one weapon of more resistless and soul-subduing force than another, it is this sublime and generous spirit of patient, inexhaustible, unconquerable forbearance, forgiveness, and beneficence. It is well worth while to try its energy upon your most fierce and inexorable foe. If you fail, you have the approbation of your conscience and the blessing of your God. But if you succeed, what a delightful and noble victory you achieve! You not only rescue a sinner from destruction, but secure the salvation of one whose case is peculiarly desperate, and whose perdition would have been doubly severe by his being twofold more than others the child of Satan.

To all that has been stated, will any reply,—?

1. “The malice of my enemy is groundless. I have never offended him by word nor deed. I have foreborne the exercise of my rights. I have studiously shunned every cause of altercation, and carefully laboured to impress him with a favourable opinion of my principles and conduct. But all in vain. My coolness is ascribed to my consciousness of injustice. My patience and gentleness are repaid with more stern and unmeasured invective and virulence. Every fresh concession and repeated act of forbearance is followed by some new

encroachment, and some more violent and intolerable aggression.”

Be thankful that you did not provoke hostilities, nor deserve his hatred. But because his malice is as wanton as it is furious, is that any reason why you should indulge in wrath, and by yielding to resentment become a partaker of his crime? Will you say that the magnitude of his guilt is a cause for diminishing your pity? or that the greatness of his danger is a ground for relaxing your endeavours for his deliverance? Must we strive to preserve the man from drowning who has dropped into a pond, but give ourselves no concern about his deliverance if he has fallen into the ocean? Does a physician prescribe for none but those whom he has previously injured, or who have lost their health in the service of religion and humanity? Even to the profligate, and to those who are under sentence of condemnation for the very crimes which have brought on their sickness, he is bound to impart his counsel and his aid. And because this most formidable moral malady has been viciously contracted, are you to withhold the means necessary for its removal? or because the danger is extreme, are you to refuse the administration of those antidotes which are most likely to counteract its violence?

2. “ My enemy is absolutely unreasonable. His hostility is not only unprovoked, but his insolence and rancour are unbounded. I have borne with him to the utmost range of human endurance. I have employed

every means which love and kindness can invent to disarm his rage, and conciliate his favour or forbearance. But all in vain. The more I multiply my efforts to mitigate his fury, and procure his good will, his ferocity seems to increase, and his hatred to acquire a deeper and more determined malignity."

This is exactly such a case as calls for the most extraordinary and strenuous exertions. He is placed in a situation pre-eminently perilous, and without uncommon measures must be inevitably undone, and sink under a condemnation signally severe. The more inveterate the disease, the patient has the greater need of the physician, and his cure will redound the more to his benefactor's skill. The more fierce and outrageous the animosity of your enemy, his guilt and danger are the greater, and you are the more bound to ply every method to accomplish his rescue. To cure a slight disorder, or conquer a feeble foe, is no great cause of exultation. But to remove an obstinate and alarming distemper, or, for a youth like David to prevail against the experienced and gigantic champion of Gath; this displays uncommon sagacity and prowess, and is a just ground of rejoicing. To pass over a trivial offence, and retain good will to a moderate foe, are not any very extraordinary matters. But to overlook gross and wanton injuries, to retain compassion and affection for a haughty and insulting adversary, and requite his virulence and abuse with fervent prayer and substantial beneficence: this is the fruit only of the gospel of

peace, and a heroism which nothing but Christian principle can inspire.

3. "My adversary is not only an enemy to me, but also a foe to God and goodness. He is perpetually employed in deeds of outrage and darkness. He is almost in all evil. He tramples reason and religion under foot. He is a pest to society, and a disgrace to humanity."

Such a character is bad indeed; but if God bears with him, you certainly may endure him. The more criminal and abandoned he is, his situation is the more alarming, and he has the greater need of your pity, your beneficence, and prayers. The person in the deepest indigence has the most urgent need of charity; and the man who is suffering the severest pain has the most urgent need of relief. And of all in a state of guilt and condemnation, those who are in the most dreadful and desperate situation have the most powerful claims upon your sympathy and care. And as this undoubtedly is the case with a wicked and malicious enemy, he is exactly the man for whose conversion and salvation you are required to exert your most strenuous and persevering efforts. If you neglect the opportunity of endeavouring to conquer his animosity, he may be undone for ever. But if you undertake in earnest to reclaim him from the error of his way, who can tell but you may succeed? Kindness and love from you—from the quarter whence they are least expected—may have a salutary and blessed effect. They may reach his heart, and convert him from

a foe into a friend, render him a blessing to society, and introduce him into the family of God.

If you succeed, you shall have cause of everlasting rejoicing. In heaven the man whom you have won by your patience and forbearance will hail you as a benefactor and friend ; and by his presence and blessedness contribute to augment the fulness of your joy. But if, notwithstanding all your benevolent exertions, you shall have the mortification to fail, you shall, at least deliver your own soul, and secure a triumph far above all Greek and Roman fame. David performed many splendid exploits. He again and again risked his life for the honour of his king and the interest of his country. But all his valorous deeds were exceeded by his generosity to Saul. Returning to the host with the head of Goliath, and saluted as he passed with the songs and acclamations of his rescued countrywomen, he did not possess a moral majesty half so sublime and imposing as when issuing from the cave with the skirt of his treacherous and deadly persecutor in his hand, whom Providence had delivered into his power, but whom he had sent away uninjured. And could you subdue a nation of ruffians and oppressors, and clear the earth of all the monsters which it contains, you could not obtain a glory half so magnificent and durable as by conquering your own spirit, and suppressing your emotions of anger and revenge. One barbarian or brute may shed the blood of another; and heathens and publicans may love those who love them and do them good.

It is only a man who is born from above, and possessed of the spirit of Christ, who can love his enemies, and do good to them that hate him.

You must forgive the offences that you receive. Your worst enemy has never inflicted upon you the ten thousandth part of the evils which you have committed against the ever-blessed God. You did not create your enemy. You have not fed and upheld him. You have not conferred on him all his faculties and powers, and the benefits and comforts that he possesses. But though God has made you, and in him you live, and move, and have your being; though he has loaded you with benefits and blessings, and given you all things freely and richly to enjoy, yet you have sinned against him, you have abused his mercies, grieved his spirit, and provoked his justice. You deserve the severest marks of his displeasure, and might righteously have been abandoned to utter destruction. And now when God has forgiven you all this sum, is it too mighty an expanse of generosity for you to forgive the faults of an erring and offending brother? When the injuries of one creature against another shrink into insignificance when contrasted with the enormity of our common crimes against the Almighty, can you plead from Jehovah the free remission of your iniquities, while you refuse to forgive the trespasses of a fellow-transgressor? Through the gospel of peace do you claim a title to a crown of life, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and eternal in the heavens? and

will you dispute and contend with a brother about a paltry and contemptible trifle?

The command of our God and Judge to forgive our enemies, is as clear and express as to abstain from theft and murder. If disregard of the latter precepts will exclude from the kingdom of heaven, how can we obtain admission there while we neglect obedience to the former? "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

SERMON VII.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

GALATIANS ii. 20.

“Christ liveth in me.”

To them that believe, Christ is precious. And no wonder that this is the case. For the blessings which they receive from his hands are innumerable, and the obligations which they owe him are immense. Though infinitely great, and eternally blessed and glorious, he has carried his love and liberality towards them far beyond all parallel and all praise. He has delivered them from evils which surpass conception, and conferred on them benefits and blessings far transcending the worth of the world and the value of creation.

The text leads us to consider one of these important blessings: the life which he communicates to the Christian. For himself the apostle says, “Christ liveth in me,” and what was true of Paul may be affirmed of every child of God. In addressing you from the words before us, we are necessarily led to observe—

- I. That Christ lives in the believer; and,
- II. That his life in the Christian is the consequence of union with him.

I. Christ lives in the believer.

This invaluable fact is repeatedly asserted in Scripture. Are we not told, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when he, therefore, who is your life, shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in glory?" Are we not assured that, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection? Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is free from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." "Christ in you the hope of glory." The relation betwixt him and his people is so close and intimate, that he identifies their existence and their interests with his own, saying, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

The excellence of this life is undervalued, and its existence is denied by the ignorant and careless, the worldly and the carnal. But there is nothing necessary to prove the existence of life as a separate independent principle, which is awanting to demonstrate the reality of spiritual life. Is life characterized by peculiar organs and senses, tastes, and appetites, pursuits and occupations, joys and sorrows? All these are to be found in the Christian life.

For if there is no reality in the spiritual life—if you who have believed in Jesus are not partakers of a new and a divine nature, and possessed of a life which the unregenerate never felt, and while they continue in their natural condition never can enjoy; say, whence all your new feelings and perceptions? Whence do you see a hand which they cannot see, and hear a voice which they cannot hear? How come you to hear the voice of God in his word, and to perceive his hand and agency in every occurrence? When elevated to prosperity, or plunged into adversity; when health and comfort crown their lot, or sickness and distress lie heavy on their dwellings; why do the worldly and irreligious imagine that this is only a chance which has befallen them, while in similar circumstances you are made in humble and devout adoration to exclaim, This is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight? While in baptism they see merely the element of water, and the actions of the administrator, how come you to discover the blood of sprinkling, and the seal of the everlasting covenant? While in the Lord's Supper they can perceive no more than bread and wine, and hear only the words which fall on the outward ear, how is it that in this ordinance you discover the memorials of your dying Redeemer's love, and the pledges of his strong and unchanging regard? While they consider the pages of inspiration as dry and insipid, and less interesting than the trash and scum perpetually issuing from the impure and irreligious press, why do you in a single sentence of the sacred volume

find a feast of fat things, and a source of refreshing and joy to your souls?

In one simple declaration, such as "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," or this, "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," or, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God," you find a treasure far superior to all that the wealth of the world can purchase, or that the mighty universe contains.

It is the promise of Him, who cannot lie, "In all places where I record my name, I will meet with you and bless you. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And he is true to his word. In the exercises of the closet and in the services of the sanctuary, you are sometimes honoured to hold fellowship with the Father and the Son. You see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off. But come up to a man of the world, when leaving any religious ordinance or exercise, and ask him where he has been, and how he has been employed? if he has been carried beyond the outward forms and observances, and enabled to penetrate into the substance and essence of the work in which he was engaged? if he has been honoured to hold communion with the God of love, or kept at a dark and painful distance? The man will stare and wonder what you mean. He will tell you that he has done his duty. He has said his prayers, heard a sermon, taken the sacrament, and what more can you wish? As for intercourse with

God, or seeing the Saviour, he knows nothing of the matter.

But is Jesus really such an ordinary character, that a man may see him without knowing that he has enjoyed such a privilege? Is there any among the companions so like him that we cannot distinguish the difference betwixt him and his brethren? A man may see, and yet be at a loss to discover the little star to which you point in a hazy night. But if, in the effulgence of noon, when the sun is shining in his strength, he lift up his face to the sky, and affirm that he cannot tell whether that blazing luminary be there, what other inference can we draw from the fact than that he is blind? And when Jesus is the joy of the renewed soul, and the sun of the celestial world, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person: when, day after day, and week after week, a man attends the ordinances of religion, and performs the exercises of devotion, and yet is unable to determine whether the Lord Jesus Christ is there, what other inference can we draw from this dreadful fact than that he is dead in trespasses and sins?

If there is no reality in the spiritual life, and if religion consists wholly in the duties of morality and an attendance upon the institutions of worship, then, Christians, whence arise all your new tastes and appetites? Why do you delight in the ordinances, and experience such a strong and intense attachment to all that is spiritual and divine? Why do you hunger and thirst after righteousness, and cleave so tenaciously to the society and service

of God? Why do you hail with ecstasy the return of the Sabbath, flee to the throne of grace with irresistible ardour, and regard the communion solemnity as a jubilee? Why do you thirst for God, the living God, love the place where his honour dwells, and long to come and appear before him?

Do such feelings fill and occupy the hearts of those who are strangers to the purifying and transforming power of godliness? Do you ever hear them exclaiming, "Saw ye him whom our souls love? Oh, that we knew where we might find him, we would come near unto him, even to his seat; yea, we would order our cause before him. O God, thou art our God: early will we seek thee. Our soul thirsteth for thee: our flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." Do you ever find them impatient to burst away from the things of earth and time, to scale the heaven of heavens, and exchange the exercises of grace for the enjoyments of glory? Did you ever hear them mourning their Lord's delay, and courting his more rapid descent, crying, Why is our Beloved so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Haste, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. They mind earthly things, and have their portion here. Grant them worldly ease and bodily indulgence, the increase of their flocks and herds, the enlargement of their trade, the augmentation of their gain, or the advancement of their fame, their power, or pleasure, and what care they for all the treasures of redeeming mercy, and

all the vast and unsearchable riches of the everlasting gospel?

Unless there is something in religion unspeakably superior to all that the most virtuous and amiable of the regenerate ever possessed, why are you affected with new joys and sorrows? Why are you so sensible of your iniquities, and so grieved and humbled for your imperfections and defects? Why are you so sensible of the law in your members, and so solicitous to get rid of the presence and power of indwelling sin? Why do we hear each of you so painfully inquiring, Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Why does it drown you in distress, and overwhelm you in despondence, when the benefactor who should relieve your souls is far from you? But why are you lost in wonder, or elevated to adoring transport, when you are allowed to come before him, to pour out all your heart in his presence, and enabled on clear scriptural authority to say, This God is my God for ever and ever? Did you bring these desires along with you into the world? Are they to be found in the souls of the gay and the giddy? Do you ever hear the indolent and carnal complaining that iniquities prevail against them, and that they cannot do the things that they would? Do you ever find them ashamed and confounded on account of their coldness and hardness of heart, and bewailing, in the bitterness of their spirit, their distance from God, and the apparent marks of his displeasure? Have you ever witnessed them crying, How long wilt

thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? If their fortune leave them, their reputation fail, their health decline, or their friends forsake them, or a debtor deceive them, we shall soon hear of their disaster, and the whole neighbourhood shall ring with their complaints. But though the God of all grace be far from them, and they have neither part nor lot in the gospel, though they are shutting themselves out of the regions of bliss, and are gathering around them the horrors of everlasting darkness, these matchless unutterable calamities never excite one sigh, nor create a moment's uneasiness.

And what is the cause of all this indifference and apathy? The presence and power of spiritual death. Their transgressions are multiplied, and their danger is dreadful. But they are dead in trespasses and sins, and can neither feel the real horrors of their situation, nor understand the extent and magnitude of their guilt and misery. For what can more effectually prove a man to be dead than a state of total insensibility? Speak to him, and he hears not. Hold up to him a chain of the most precious jewels, he sees them not. The doctrines of the gospel may drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, but the unrenewed man feels them not. Sinai may flash, and Divine justice may scatter its terrors, but he perceives them not. The seeing may start at a shadow, but the blind will not shrink from the approach of a cannon ball. Thunder may agitate the waking, and break the slumbers of the

sleeping, but it cannot disturb the repose of the deaf. The living may feel the slightest scratch or blow, but the dead cannot experience the least uneasiness though torn by the rack, or crushed beneath the weight of a mountain. The living in Jerusalem may tremble at the most gentle frown that passes over the face of their heavenly Father, and shudder at the smallest loss of their religious joy, but those who are spiritually dead entertain no fear of the wrath of Omnipotence, and rush boldly and recklessly on to the overwhelming horrors of everlasting misery.

From these facts we see that the experience of the faithful confirms the truth implied in the text, that Christ lives in believers.

We observe,

II. That this life in them is the consequence of union with Christ.

Since Christ lives in his people, he and they must be spiritually united. For if two cannot walk together except they be agreed, how can Christ live in us unless we are joined to him, and made one spirit with him? Before there can be a mutual indwelling betwixt him and his people, there must first be a complete and cordial union.

This subject leads us into the very heart of Christianity, and brings before us one of the most sublime and invaluable privileges of the redeemed, which constitutes the foundation of all the blessings which we possess in time, and the security for all the glory which we shall enjoy through eternity. The man who is possessed of this high dignity is a-kin to the spirits of the just made

perfect, and heir to all the unbounded and inexhaustible sources of never-ending delight.

But is this representation real? When the Lord Jesus Christ is possessor of heaven and of earth—when he fills immensity, and inhabits eternity—when he enjoys the command of creation, and in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is it possible that he will stoop so low and condescend so far as to grace our humble habitation, and enter our mean and polluted hearts?

Yes; this inestimable privilege is not only possible but real. Every thing necessary to prove a fact, concurs to confirm this delightful and transporting declaration, that Christ dwells in the hearts of his saints.

What is the ultimate design of his ministers in all their humane and persevering exertions? “That Christ may be formed in their people the hope of glory.” What is the grand and leading object of their intercessions and supplications in behalf of their converted hearers? “That Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith.” What forms the riches of the glory of the gospel? “Christ in us the hope of glory.” Why does Christ come along in the calls and invitations of the gospel? To secure our affections, and gain admission to our hearts. “Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” What is the result of obedience to his own blessed authority? “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and

make our abode with him." What was the petition which he most forcibly urged in his last act of intercession? "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." And where is it that Jehovah has placed his throne and fixed his favourite residence? In the soul humbled for sin, and sanctified by grace. "Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and lofty place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones."

Our very bodies are consecrated and enshrined by the presence of the Eternal Spirit. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom ye have of God: and ye are not your own?" By this sacred union our souls are made a habitation of God through the Spirit.

The presence of Christ in the heart throws an air of sanctity over the believer's life, and an impenetrable shield over his person, so that it is at the peril of the aggressor to offer any injury either to him or his property. "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." He that toucheth us, toucheth the apple of his own eye. The reproaches cast on us light on him, and he regards every outrage and insult which we sustain as inflicted upon himself. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity, and in all our afflictions he is afflicted. Our very existence and interests are identified with his own, and hence his own

resurrection and ascension are the pledge and security of ours. "Because I live ye shall live also. If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you."

SERMON VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

GALATIANS ii. 20.

“ Christ liveth in me.”

FROM the important and invaluable fact that Christ lives in us, it naturally and necessarily follows that his life is the model and pattern of our own.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who, from everlasting resided in the presence of the Father, and in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, became man, that we might become the sons of God. This kind and blessed purpose was early formed. It was no sooner determined that we should be the subjects of saving mercy, than it was decreed that we should be possessed of a resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ. “ We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we might be holy and without blame before him in love,” and “ predestinated to be conformed to his image, that he might be the first born among many brethren.”

In the days of our ignorance and security we are very

far from being like the Son of God. We are sensual, not having the spirit. We are of our father the devil. We delight in his work, and comply with his pleasure. But no sooner are we quickened together with Christ, than we are transformed by his spirit into his own lovely and blessed likeness. Without this similarity to his character, the Lord Jesus Christ would be ashamed to be known as our friend, or to acknowledge us as his followers. But ashamed of us he need not, he shall not, he cannot be. For he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. The same mind which was in him is in us: and as he was in the world, even so are we in the world.

That this is the case will appear by attending to

I. The object of his life.

II. The attention which he paid to the exercises of piety and devotion.

III. His kindness and beneficence to men, and

IV. His unceasing desire to possess the presence and enjoy the love of God.

I. The object of his life.

This was to advance the glory of God. What brought him from the regions of light and purity to our world of darkness and pollution? What led him to relinquish the songs of angels and seraphim, to endure the contradiction of sinners, and the outrages of the ungodly, to enclose the glories of his divinity within the narrow compass of a human form, and die on the accursed tree? Not to

increase his own felicity or honour; for to that which is infinite no accession can be made. Filling immensity, inhabiting eternity, and possessed of all the fulness of the Godhead, he could gain no addition to his glory or blessedness. He came, therefore, not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him. So steadily and ardently did he keep this object in view, that from the age of twelve till the day on which he died, he was perpetually employed about his Father's business. He pleased not himself. He sought not his own honour. It was his meat to do the will of Him that sent him, and finish his work. He foresaw the Lord always before him: and whatever he undertook or did was undertaken or done to secure the grand object of his incarnation, the glory of his Father. Accordingly, when leaving the world, he could say, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Now if Christ be formed in us; if we are crucified with him, and he live in us, it is evident that our life must be a copy or representation of his own. Some characters are shockingly inconsistent. They are one thing abroad, and another at home—are one thing on Sabbath, and another through the week—one thing at church, and quite another on their farms, in their shops, and in their counting-rooms. But the Lord Jesus Christ is an unchangeable character. No irregularity nor disorder ever disturbs the uniform and unbroken tenor of his conduct, nor tarnishes the lustre of his lovely and glorious self-

consistency. In heaven and on earth, in public and in private, on the throne of light, and on the cross of Calvary, the great principles on which he acts are absolutely invariable. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

Now, if he be for ever the same, and if he live in you; in other words, if you are Christians at all, is it not clear and unquestionable that, since he lived to the glory of the Father, you also will, in all things, be possessed of the same spirit, and actuated by a strong and intense desire to do the will of God, and spread abroad the honour of his name?

You may not all be placed in the same circumstances, nor blessed with the same advantages. There may be a wide difference in your age and abilities, in your rank and fortune, but in your spirit and temper, in your purpose and determination, there is none. Whatever may be your place or your employment, your years or your talents, you will show your close and decided resemblance to your divine and adorable Redeemer, by a supreme and unreserved devotedness to the interest and honour of God. Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, you will do all to his glory. In every action and undertaking your leading and single inquiry will be, Is this for the glory of God? Is this the measure by which I can at this time most effectually comply with his will, and most extensively promote his praise? Have you a leisure hour at your command, or a sum of money at your disposal? Have you the possession of authority or

influence in the church or in the world? You are not to employ these in the way most suitable to your own ease or interest, your own inclination or honour, but in the manner best calculated to advance your spiritual improvement, and accomplish the great purposes of your creation and redemption. In reading and hearing, in conversation and prayer, in your worldly occupations and religious exercises, neither utter a word, nor move a step without a simple and express desire that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus your Lord.

II. If Christ live in you, then much of your time will be spent in exercises of piety and devotion.

You will not only devote all that you have and are to the interest and honour of God, but you will take pleasure in the services of religion, and in spiritual exercises and employments. Jesus was not more distinguished as a man of sorrows than as a man of prayer. Though in his divine nature he was creator and Lord of all, and possessed of a fellowship with his Father in all the fulness and glory of the Godhead, and therefore had no occasion for the elevating and strengthening refreshments of devotion, he cultivated constant and close communion with the throne of grace. Whatever he undertook or did was not only undertaken and done with a distinct and explicit reference to the glory of his Father, but was also enriched and sweetened by prayer. In entering on the different services of his laborious and painful life, his soul naturally rose to the eternal throne, and courted the elevation and vigour to be derived from the uncreated fountain of

light and love. After spending the hours of sunshine in instructing and admonishing the ignorant and careless, in relieving the sorrows of the disconsolate, and the sufferings of the distressed, he spent the live-long night in intercession. And on other occasions, when scenes of extraordinary toil or anguish were approaching, he rose a great while before it was day to seek the solitude of the mountains to give himself to prayer.

And still wherever Jesus takes up his abode in a soul, the man gives himself to prayer. He not only lives in the spirit, and keeps himself all the day long in the fear and love of God, but he is frequently on his knees. He redeems time for prayer. He delights in drawing near to God, and in pouring out his soul before him. If he is not praying always, he is at least always in a praying spirit. No wish rises in his mind but he spreads it before God. He continually says, "All that I desire is before thee." No danger threatens, nor any trouble assails him without sending him anew to the Father of mercies, and the God of love. Amidst the various changes and trials of life he is careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication makes all his requests known to God.

Is the Sabbath too long for the important purposes for which it was set apart, so that, in order to consume what the world regards as its dull and weary hours, he must lie longer in bed and go earlier to rest than usual, speak his own words, and find his own pleasure on that sacred day? To him the Sabbath is a delight, holy of the

Lord, and honourable. Can you shut him out of the house of God, or persuade him to shun or shorten the services of the sanctuary? He loves the place where the Divine honour dwells, and prefers a day in the courts of the Lord to a thousand. You may obstruct his approach to the sanctuary, and block up its avenues with the strongest masonry; but he must be in, for Jehovah has bestowed his blessing there, and promised his people his gracious presence. And what is the earth with all that it contains without the presence and favour of the God of love? "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. My soul thirsteth for God, the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" And when he gets near the God of his salvation how does he act? He pours out his complaint before him, and shows him his trouble. He unfolds all that is passing in his spirit, and fills his mouth with arguments. There is no coldness, langour, nor formality in his devotion. His salvation is at stake. He is treating with the King of kings upon matters of infinite importance and endless duration, and therefore his religion is the exercise of the heart, the lifting up of the soul to God. In reading, hearing, meditating, praying, and communicating, he is never satisfied unless his heart is touched, warmed, and melted, and unless he is blessed with some nearness to God, and honoured with some marks of the Divine approbation and favour. What is

the body when the spirit is fled? And what avail all the ordinances and exercises of piety when we are deprived of elevating and transforming communion with the God of love?

If Christ live in us, and if he be the same to-day that he was yesterday, and has been for ever, then we may rest assured,

III. That our life must be a life of kindness and beneficence to men.

In the days of his flesh Christ went about doing good. He was perpetually employed in ministering to the souls or bodies of men. No case of distress was beyond his skill, and no sufferer ever solicited his assistance in vain. Anticipating the benignant results of his mission, the celestial harbingers sung, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will to men." And never were words more signally and beautifully verified than these were in the life and labours of the man Christ Jesus. All the sons and daughters of suffering and sorrow partook of his sympathy. With a benevolence that knew no bounds, and a well-doing that never was weary, he dispensed the blessings of health and salvation wherever he came, and administered freely to the relief of all the wretched. In following his line of march, it was easy to see, from the comfort and bliss which he left behind, that the God of mercy had been there. In travelling through the towns and villages of Judea and Galilee, you would have found some where, amidst all the crowds which they contained, there was not an individual either languishing

under bodily distress, or afflicted with mental trouble. And why? Because the Lord of life had yesterday passed by, and healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. Notwithstanding all the deeds of power and of pity which he wrought, he was despised and rejected of men. He was defamed, traduced, insulted, and mocked. But what then? Did he indulge in clamour, or give way to contention? suspend the compassionate exercise of his power, or exert it to intimidate or destroy his foes? No: he meekly endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. He did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. When he was reviled, he reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not. His enemies shared in his generosity, and one of the last acts of his life was a prayer for his murderers.

Now, unless the Lord Jesus Christ has renounced his immutability, and has to-day ceased to be what he was yesterday, it necessarily follows that, if he lives in us, we will do good unto all as we have opportunity, devote ourselves to godliness and goodness, and be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

If there are strife and contention in a family, is the clamour raised and the contest maintained by the disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus? If there are violence and turbulence, or dissipation and debauchery in a neighbourhood, are these quarrels created, and these scenes of vice and profligacy fomented and promoted by the followers of the Son of God? If there are deceit, duplicity,

and fraud practised in trade ; or slander, detraction, and malevolence encouraged in social intercourse, are these vile and despicable habits adopted by the votaries of Him who forbade us to render railing for railing? If the principles of the young are perverted—if the ignorant and inexperienced are betrayed into courses of criminality—if the poor are deprived of their rights—if the widow's heart is crushed by the hand of oppression—if the helpless are made the victims of cruelty, and dragged into slavery, or detained in bondage ; are these atrocities planned, or these enormities perpetrated by the servants of Him who taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to do to others as we would that they should do to us? Does Christianity involve its subjects in sedition and riot?—initiate them in the arts of seduction and villany? impel them to deeds of outrage and plunder? inspire a spirit of rancour and hostility? render man the foe and scourge of man, and arm him for the slaughter and destruction of his brethren? Is it Christianity that perpetuates the reign of poverty and wretchedness, fills our gaols, crowds our bridewells, and gives such constant employment to the officers of justice?

These are the works of the graceless and ungodly, the men who neither know God nor obey the gospel of his Son. If, over the whole extent of our globe, there is a single penny unjustly withheld from the indigent—a single family kept in agitation and discord—a widow's heart broken by oppression—a blow inflicted by violence—or a single child of Adam subjected to the eruptions of

fury and tyranny ; the monster by whom these atrocities are executed, is a creature without God and without Christ in the world. The wisdom that is from above is pure and peacable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. They have their conversation in heaven, and their fruit unto holiness. They are followers of God as dear children ; and do good unto all as they have opportunity.

They may not have the skill to convert the vicious nor reclaim the abandoned. They have not the power to give sight to the blind, nor to cure the sick by a miracle. They may not be able to build hospitals for the reception of the aged and infirm, nor endow churches for the preaching of the gospel, nor fit out missionaries for the propagation of Christianity, nor pour in treasures to feed the funds necessary for the circulation of the Scriptures.

But one thing we know is, that wherever Jesus lives in a soul, he will teach the man to be blameless and harmless, to do nothing that is unjust or injurious to any. The man will not please himself, but seek the good of many to their edification. He will labour to bring all to the truth, that they may be saved. He cannot do the things that he would ; but what he can, to the utmost of his power, yea, and beyond his power, he will do for the honour of God and the benefit of his brethren. Taught to love God with his whole heart, he learns to love his neighbour as himself, and to do good unto all as he has opportunity. Constrained by the example, and animated

by the spirit of Him who came from the abodes of purity and peace to be a blessing and a ransom for all, he lifts up his head with benignity, and casts over the wide expanse of this apostate world a look of tenderness and love for all its guilty inhabitants, and cultivates a warm and strong solicitude for the worth and the welfare of all who live. Where is the scene of suffering or of sadness for which he feels no sorrow, and to which he does not strive to extend relief? Who is weak, and he is not weak? Who is offended, and he burns not? He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. Like his adorable Master, he makes the force of his prayers, his beneficence, and virtues, descend in rich and refreshing abundance upon all.

He may encounter opposition, reproach, and persecution. But what then? Can these cancel his obligations to piety and philanthropy, or relax the energy of his holy benevolence and zeal? They only give him the privilege of signaling the elevation of his mind, and the generosity of his principles. They rouse him to increased activity and ardour in the work of humanity and piety, and lead him to exert more decided and strenuous efforts for the present and everlasting welfare of his foes. Instead of being overcome of evil, he overcomes evil with good. For he loves his enemies, does good to them that hate him, and prays for them who despitefully use him and persecute him.

If Christ live in us, and if he be to-day what he was yesterday, and has been for ever, then,

IV. Our supreme desire will be to possess the presence and enjoy the love of God.

Our Divine Redeemer foresaw the Lord always before him. In the absence of his disciples, companions, and friends, the presence and love of the Father compensated the want of the whole, and were to him all in all. The cause and interest of his Father absorbed his thoughts and engrossed his time and attention. The zeal of his house consumed him, and his own interest and honour were so identified with those of Him who sent him, that the reproaches cast on his Father fell on him. Amidst the toils and conflicts of his pilgrimage he was sustained and solaced by a sense of his Father's presence and support. "The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And when he came to die, the crown and consummation of his desires were to return to the presence of his Father, and enjoy the unbounded overflowings of his love. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify thou me *with thine own self*, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Now, unless the Lord Jesus Christ has sustained an alteration; and He who, from everlasting, had continued the same, has of late become mutable and changeful; if he live in us, on what will our affections be principally and supremely placed? Will we thirst for earthly fame or created wealth? for present ease or temporal enjoy-

ments? Oh! what are the health and safety of the body compared with the peace and prosperity of the soul? What are the bounties of providence or the delights of life contrasted with the riches of grace and the provisions of the everlasting covenant? What signify the productions of earth or the treasures of time when weighed against the glories of heaven and the triumphs of eternity? Who would prefer a taper to the sun, or exchange a kingdom and a crown for the toys of an infant? And, give us the possession of the earth, and the command of creation, what is the worth of the whole when laid in the balance with the immense and inexhaustible resources of an infinite and all-sufficient God? The weightiest masses of matter have their dimensions, and the wide creation has its limits, but God has none. The sources of created happiness may soon be exhausted, but the riches of grace are unsearchable, and the stores of Immanuel are unbounded. In him there is enough to fill and feast the universe, and last for ever and ever.

From this fountain the angels of light have drawn all their felicity. We know of no higher nor happier creatures than these pure and exalted spirits. But from the first moment of their formation to the present hour, they have neither known nor sought any other enjoyment than what is derived from the presence and friendship of the God whom they love and adore. And this is the unknown and ineffable delight of the infinite and all-sufficient God himself. This blessedness is not dependent on the magnitude or beauty of the material creation. Mag-

nificent and splendid as it is, from everlasting Jehovah possessed all the majesty and blessedness which he now enjoys, before either the sun, the moon, the stars, or any part of the vast universe was formed; and though the whole were this moment swept from the face of being, they could not carry off one particle of his blessedness or glory.

It is on this sublime and unbounded blessedness that the heart of the believer is supremely and constantly set. In the duties, labours, and enjoyments of life, his great desire and ambition are to be in the fear of the Lord, to walk with God, and abide in the joys and comforts of the Holy Ghost. In the ordinances of religion and exercises of devotion, he goes beyond the mere form and shadow. He thirsts not for knowledge and instruction, but for God, the living God. He is anxious to go, not to the house or table of the Lord, but to God his exceeding joy. Amidst the honours and enjoyments of life, his soul breaks away from all that is seen and temporal, enters into that which is unseen and eternal, travels upwards to the throne of light, and stands adoring before the God of love. From the brightest and best that immensity contains he turns away his eyes, and, fixing them on the Three-one God, he says, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides thee. Other springs will dry, and other lights expire, but this is a fountain which will never fail, and a sun which will never grow dim.

The nearer that the Christian approaches God, and

the more that he acquires of the divine presence and love, his desires become the more exalted and spiritual, and the more strong and intense for the complete possession of the whole of his sublime and sacred portion. He never can think that any thing has been gained as long as any part of this matchless inheritance is unknown and unenjoyed. For him the Bible is not too large, nor the promises too numerous, nor heaven too splendid, nor Jesus too rich in grace or great in power. He rejoices in their extent and grandeur. He rejoices that they are so vast and unbounded. He takes them as they are, and longs for the complete and perfect possession of the whole. His heart's desire and prayer are to reduce the promises to his possession, to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and filled with all the fulness of God. Since God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, the believer can never rest till he secure all the vast and ineffable benefits which this immense and unspeakable gift includes. Each is invaluable, and the whole are infinitely worthy of his acceptance. Through eternity, when his happiness is complete, the substance, essence, and perfection of his bliss will be the immediate presence and all-sufficient fulness of God, and therefore in the meantime his most fervent and intense ambition is to possess these now as his inheritance and portion.

We have thus seen that wherever Christ lives in a believer, the Christian will live to the glory of God; he will cultivate devout and pious affections, exercise kind-

ness and beneficence to men, and feel a supreme desire to possess the presence, and enjoy the love of God.

In every thing the Lord Jesus Christ left us an example that we should follow his steps. And believers take Christ for their model and guide. The same mind is in us which was in him: and as he was in the world, even so are we in the world.

He was the representative of his Father, the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. The resemblance was so perfect and entire that he who saw the one saw the other. "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" When we behold Jesus moving about in the walks of beneficence and mercy, instructing the ignorant, relieving the distressed, melted into tears at the hardness of the impenitent, weeping at the grave of Lazarus, and healing the broken-hearted, we see the compassion and kindness of the Eternal Father, and the sorrows which he would have felt, and the tears which he would have shed if he had been placed in the room of his son.

We are the representatives of Christ. We are required to bear about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body. Wherever we go, and in whatever we are employed, we must imitate the example, and cultivate the spirit of our adorable Master. We must hold forth the word of life,

shine in the beauties of holiness, and let men see that we have been with Jesus. In every undertaking and action we must display the kindness, the gentleness, and holiness of Christ, and give the world a specimen of the amiable and glorious excellences which dignified and adorned his character.

SERMON IX.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

EPHESIANS iii. 17.

“ That Christ may dwell in your hearts.”

To illustrate or enumerate all the privileges of the Christian life is no easy matter. We may count the dust of the earth, or measure the height of the pole, sooner than unfold the number or value of the benefits secured by Christ dwelling in us. Our possessions in time, and our prospects through eternity, are innumerable and immense; but these are all founded in our union to the Lord Jesus Christ, and flow from his dwelling in us.

In speaking of the blessings derived from his inhabitation with his people, we shall consider the safety, the instruction, the holiness, the dignity, and happiness which his presence imparts.

Let us attend,

I. To the safety which his presence secures to you who believe.

Your riches are inestimable. No mind can conceive

the worth of the soul, nor the value of those blessings which flow from the heart of the God of love, and which were purchased by the sufferings and death of his son.

Many enemies envy your enjoyments, and are watching their opportunity to strip you of your possessions, and plunge you in wretchedness and ruin. The world lies in wickedness, and the graceless and ungodly are perpetually watching for your halting. And the hosts of darkness, still more rancorous and formidable than even the children of disobedience, are combined for your destruction. We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and the rulers of darkness of this world.

But amidst the firm and determined combination of earth and hell, and amidst the bitterest of their rancour, and the most violent of their power and malice, you are safe. However exalted your honour, and however invaluable your privileges, over all your glory there is a defence. In ordinary cases you would think your habitation secure if it were honoured to lodge the most gallant commander and successful warrior of his day. But what would be the presence of a Wallace or a Bruce compared with the protection afforded by the residence of the Lord Jesus Christ in your hearts? Can any plot escape his notice, or any foe assault him by surprise? No, for though he dwells in your hearts, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him. He is in all, and through all, and over all. Hell is naked before him, and destruction has no covering. And is there any among

all the legions of darkness that has an arm like God, or can thunder with a voice like him? The deeps of the ocean may be more profound than those of a river. The stars are higher than the hills; and one creature may be possessed of greater power and resources than another; but is the strongest and most formidable in all their hosts a match for Omnipotence, and able to cope with his creator? The waves may lift up their heads—they may create a tumult on the main, and spread havoc and consternation round our planet, but can they embroil the peace of the skies, or extinguish the bright orb of day? And though the heathen may rage, and the powers of darkness instigate the rulers of this world to deeds of outrage and cruelty, can they scale the heaven of heavens, or wrest the sceptre of empire from the hands of the Eternal? Seated on the throne of the universe, and wielding at pleasure all the energies of Deity, in a moment he could clear creation of his foes, and lay the universe in ashes. Every movement of his will carries along with it the power of omnipotence, and can dispose as he chooses of all that immensity contains. The angels on their thrones of light are not more safe than the faithful who are crucified with Christ, and have him formed in them the hope of glory. They have no greater security than the presence and power of the Almighty, and you have no less; for, since Christ dwelleth in you, the Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms.

Are you solicitous for the enlargement of your infor-

mation, and the improvement of your mental powers? Then attend,

II. To the instruction which he imparts.

Every branch of knowledge has its use. Instruction raises the civilized above the savage as far as these rise above the brutes. But real religion as far transcends the worth and value of philosophy and science as these excel the drivelling of an idiot or the stupidity of a beast. A man may be familiar with the mightiest and most stupendous of the works of the Most High, and yet be ignorant of God himself. He may be acquainted with all the processes in trade, and be able to descant on the sources of national wealth and public prosperity, and yet be a stranger to the true riches and the way to everlasting peace and felicity. He may be loaded with the treasures of erudition, and master of all the discoveries of skill and genius, and yet be destitute of the knowledge of the only thing which can bless him with present peace, or land him amidst the delights and transports of a triumphant immortality. For though the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy works, many who have employed most of their time in exploring the wonders presented to our view on the face of the sky, have lived without God, and neither known him nor Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

But when, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The knowledge of Christ, and of him crucified, is the infallible guide to

glory. This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

There is none that teacheth like Christ. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. And whilst he has the command of all the fulness of Deity, he has also free access to the mind, and can open the understanding to receive the instructions which he communicates. He leads us into all truth, and gives us an unction whereby we know all things. Facts concealed from the men of learning, genius, and research, are placed before our contemplation, and disclosed to our comprehension. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.

If, therefore, science raise the philosopher as far above the savage as the latter is exalted above the brutes, grace elevates the believer as far above the highest and noblest of our unregenerate race as an angel is exalted above a devil.

Do you court the moral dignity of your nature, and long in all things for conformity to the will of God? Then look,

III. At the holiness which he bestows.

Is any purity greater than his, who is the perfection of beauty and of excellence? who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all? who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person? Yet, if you are Christians at all, this pure, perfect, blessed,

and glorious Redeemer, dwells in you by his gracious presence, and is able and willing to impart to you all the purity and spirituality which you can court. He can put his law in your minds, and write it on your hearts. He can bless you with his own image, and work in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He can sanctify you wholly, and perfect what concerns you.

Can you ever be afraid of becoming too spiritual and holy? of praying with too great fulness and fervour? of conversing with too much intelligence and profit? of loving God with too much warmth and affection? or of serving him with too great activity and success?

Would it grieve you to be as pure and holy as the angels of light? Would it afflict or alarm you to possess all the holiness and spirituality which the law of God inculcates?

If you are real Christians, nothing can delight you more, than to obtain entire deliverance from sin, and perfect conformity to the will of God. Your highest ambition is to have the same mind in you which was in Christ, and to be holy even as God is holy. By Christ's dwelling in you, this blessed and invaluable privilege is secured. You become one spirit with him, and have the same mind in you which was in him.

It is true that you have not yet attained, neither are you already perfect. But your likeness to Christ is begun. Though he is small and feeble, the infant as really belongs to the human race as Goliath. And the resemblance betwixt Christ and the Christian, though

incomplete, is real, and will ultimately become perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

Are you desirous of promoting the worth and the welfare of all around you. Then look—

IV. At the usefulness which the residence of Christ in the soul produces.

Who rendered such services to our race as the Lord Jesus Christ? If there has been a soul rescued from hell; if a degree of comfort has been tasted by a human creature on earth; or one of all our spirits transported to the regions of glory, the whole has been the work of Immanuel. It is he who has turned aside the vials of almighty vengeance, who has preserved our world from becoming the suburbs of hell, who has delivered us from going down to the pit, and opened up to us the path of life. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.

In the broad and extensive manifestation of Divine beneficence, we cannot follow the Son of God. We cannot reveal truth. We cannot atone for sin. We cannot work out a justifying righteousness, bring down the fulness of the Godhead to our humble habitation, raise the dead, nor exalt the sons of Adam to sit on the throne of light and of love. These are works peculiar to the adorable Redeemer, and in which we can have no share.

But we can walk in the light. We can hold forth the word of life, and shine in the beauties of holiness. We can circulate the Scriptures; unfold their contents; tell

of the righteousness of Christ, and direct our perishing brethren to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. We can be ready for every useful undertaking, and be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Who are such benefactors to the world as the heirs of heaven? They relieve the poor—they instruct the young and ignorant—they preach the gospel, and carry round the globe the glad tidings of redeeming mercy. They are eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. They are covering the earth with intelligence, peace, freedom, piety, and comfort, and filling the realms of light with souls converted to the faith and obedience of the gospel. We cannot create a sun. But by opening a passage through the walls, we can admit light into a dungeon. And though we cannot atone for sin, nor work out a justifying righteousness, by making the gospel known, we may bring our brethren to the enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ, and the possession of all the blessings of his salvation. We are not their saviours: but by introducing them to the enjoyment of blessings so numerous and vast, we prove their best benefactors, and will furnish them with a cause of everlasting rejoicing.

Do you wish to raise your condition, and acquire a high degree of distinction and honour? Then meditate—

V. On the dignity which he confers.

Most people are ambitious of worldly honours. They

are vain of their connection with the great, and eager to enjoy the notice and kindnesses of kings and princes.

But what are all the potentates of earth, compared with the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? What is the sceptre which they wield, or the empire which they possess, compared with the power and majesty of Him, whose kingdom ruleth over all, and who doeth what seemeth good in his sight in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth? Can they identify our existence and interests with their own? support us in trouble? deliver us from death? raise us from the dead? introduce us into heaven? and place us on the throne of light and love?

But all this, and infinitely more, is performed by the Lord Jesus Christ. He admits us to the greatest nearness and intimacy with himself. Addressing the Father in our behalf, he says,—“ I in them, and they in me, that they also may be one in us.” With his complacent smile of benignity and kindness, he looks on all his followers, and says,—“ Because I live, ye shall live also. To my sheep I give eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there also shall my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”

A prince occasionally makes a splendid figure. He has a grand appearance on his coronation day. His troops, his trumpeters, his nobles and officers of state in all their rich and gorgeous attire, create an august and

imposing spectacle. But what is the majesty of the most magnificent and powerful of earthly sovereigns when contrasted with the retinue of the meanest and lowest in all the household of faith? The angels of light are their guardians. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Their presence is concealed from the world. But would God draw aside the veil thrown around their celestial forms, what a sight should we behold! Think of the case of Elisha at Dothan. To the eye of sense his case was deplorable and desperate. The city was encompassed with a great host of Syrians, and the helpless prophet, it might have been thought, must soon have become their prisoner and victim. But amidst this formidable array the servant of God was safe. The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Now what graceless monarch ever possessed such a glorious train? Yet such is the dignity of the saints, and such is their constant, though invisible guard.

But after all, in the present life we are incapable of judging of the real dignity and ultimate grandeur of the redeemed. These earthly tabernacles must give way—we must see him as he is, and sit down with him in his kingdom, and upon his throne, before we can tell the full amount of the elevation and grandeur of those whom the king delighteth to honour. Their splendour will at least equal the brilliancy of the skies—for they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. Our

dignity will be similar to his own—for beholding openly his glory, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory. His elevation and grandeur will be the measure of ours. When he appears we shall appear with him in glory.

Are you in love with happiness and enjoyment? Reflect, then,

VI. On the happiness which he bestows.

Jesus is rich in grace. In him all fulness dwells. He has a great and large dominion. The wide universe, with all that it contains is his own. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. But creation, with all its extent and magnificence, is the least part of his property. He has the possession of all the resources of Deity; for in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. While, however, he has the whole universe at command, and all the resources of Deity at his disposal, he is head over all things to the church, and has the entire management and controul of all the blessings of grace, and all the riches of redeeming mercy.

Each of these blessings is invaluable, for it flows from the heart of the God of love, and is planned, prepared, and bestowed for the benefit of his church, his chosen. And what may you expect to come from the heart of the God of love? It is expected that the donations of men will correspond to their rank and character. From a father we may expect kindness, and from a king liberality and munificence. What, then, may we expect from the Creator and Lord of all, who so loved the world that he

gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life? The gifts of his grace must be immense; for if he laid the foundations of his munificence in such a costly manifestation of generosity, every future communication of his benignity must possess some correspondence with his first and unspeakable gift.

And such accordingly is the case. His gifts are not limited to bodily comforts or temporal enjoyments, to present prosperity or worldly ease and honour. These scarcely deserve the name of blessings; they are left for the grovelling creatures who mind earthly things, and have their portion here. For them that love him, Jesus has prepared a better portion, honours more exalted, and joys more refined and exquisite. These are fellowship with God, the adoption of children, access into his presence, peace and joy in believing, the first fruits of his Spirit, and the earnest and foretaste of boundless and never-ending glory.

The gospel with its blessings has been provided by the God of love to manifest the generosity of his nature, and give free exercise to his liberality. The creation is a stupendous specimen of his power. Though he is able to surpass all that he has already wrought, he has done enough to show that his might is irresistible, and that his understanding is unsearchable. The angels are bright monuments of his purity. Their hearts are free from corruption, and their conduct from inconsistency. They

do his will with constancy and delight, with activity and ardour.

But though the angels reflected the splendours of his holiness, and the universe was a magnificent proof of his power, an object was still wanting to illustrate his unbounded liberality and munificence. And this he has found in the subjects of his saving mercy. "That in the ages to come he might show the *exceeding* riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." What, then, must be the amount of our felicity, when redemption has been employed on purpose to display to an adoring universe the extent of his liberality, and the greatness of his generosity and grace?

Nothing less than the illuminating influences of the Holy Ghost can enable us to perceive this love. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Nothing less than Divine power can fit us to sustain the vast and infinite amount of bliss which the gospel conveys. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth

knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

And what wonder that it requires the teaching of the eternal spirit to reveal the blessings of redemption, and the power of God to strengthen us for their enjoyment, when we remember that these blessings were purchased by the toil and blood of the Son of God, and that the sufferings and sacrifice of a person of his divine dignity and glorious excellences are incomparably more valuable, and show a love infinitely greater than the surrender of the universe and all that it contains! Since, therefore, he loved us, and gave himself for us, how unutterable and immense must be the blessings which he has purchased for them who love him!

SERMON X.

THE DIFFERENT BUILDERS.

1ST CORINTHIANS iii. 10.

“ Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”

THE declaration in the verse immediately following the text, “ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” shows that he is the foundation of which the Apostle is speaking. Isaiah xxviii. 16, 1st Peter ii. 4—6, intimate that building on Christ is substantially the same with believing on him.

The language before us implies that we must build, and that when we build, it must be on the foundation laid in Zion. But though these truths are plain and obvious, they are overlooked or disregarded by multitudes. Some, knowingly and deliberately, never put a hand to the work of God, nor employ any means to ensure the salvation of their souls: and many who are solicitous for their everlasting welfare, and very active and diligent in rearing an edifice which they imagine will

endure through eternity, from their ignorance of the foundation, are involving themselves in endless ruin.

In compassion, therefore, at once to those who are totally neglecting their souls, and those who are proceeding on erroneous principles, or building on a false foundation, I shall address,

I. Those who are not building at all, or who are neglecting religion altogether; and

II. Those who are building, or who are attending to their salvation.

I shall address,

I. Those who are not building at all, or who are neglecting religion altogether.

These may be divided into two classes,—the idle, and the mischievous.

1. The idle.

The text implies that we must build—that we must be religious—that we must embrace the gospel, and believe on the Lord Jesus; for unless it is the duty of each to build on this foundation, why is every man required to take heed how he buildeth thereupon?

But is this the case with all men? Are all men working the work of God? Is every individual in this congregation building upon the Lord Jesus Christ? Some are quite idle. You have never spent one hour in the service of God, nor in serious, active, earnest preparation for eternity. You are busy about your farms and your merchandise, your meat and drink, your dress

and amusements. But no argument nor entreaty, no remonstrance nor call, can rouse you to flee from the wrath to come, and attend to the salvation of your souls.

You imagine that religion may be very useful to those who have leisure and inclination to study its doctrines, and practise its duties. You even admit, that it is necessary and indispensable for elders and preachers, for ministers and those who make a great profession of piety. But as for you, you neither know nor wish to know anything about the matter. You have your families and your own affairs to mind. You have more work on your hands than you can well perform, and you have no time to throw away about airy speculations, nor any desire to molest yourselves about things that are invisible, and perfectly beyond your reach. You have the Bible—but you will not study the book of God. You have the Sabbath—but you will not devote it to the service of the Most High. Some of you, perhaps, live in families who worship the Creator and Lord of all; but what have you to do with God? and, therefore, when others are reading his word or praying, you are slumbering or sleeping. You sometimes enter the sanctuary—but what have you to do with the gospel? Therefore, when others are listening to the invitations of mercy, your minds are roving after their own fancies; you are looking round you, or laying yourselves down to indulge your drowsiness till the service ends. You say that you never pretended to be better than your neighbours, nor troubled yourselves about religious notions; but you have faith-

discharged your duty to your families and to society, and you are sure that God will be no worse to you than to others, and will perhaps put you on a level with the best, notwithstanding all their talk about dark and unintelligible mysteries and speculations.

My dear friends, if you had no soul, or if your soul laboured under no sin; if you had found out a retreat where the hand of Jehovah could not reach you, or if you possessed greater strength than the Almighty, you might have some reason, or at least some apology for your carelessness and insensibility. But when you know that there is a spirit in man, and that the inspiration of the Almighty has taught him understanding—when you know that all unrighteousness is sin, and that the wages of every sin is death—when you know that you have done much to provoke the displeasure of the Lord of hosts—that he is in all, and through all, and over all, and that none can deliver out of his hands, can any thing be more irrational and absurd, more infatuated and ruinous, than to throw away the day of your visitation, and to trifle with your eternal welfare?

Do you say that you have no leisure for religion? Then tell me if sickness will delay its visits, or death put off his attack, till you have time to receive them? If you have no leisure for religion, how come you to command so much time for sauntering about in indolence? for gossiping with your companions? for dosing and sleeping during the public and private worship of God? and for spending hours, and perhaps days and nights in

drunkenness and revelling? Does it require more time to serve the Father of mercies than the devil, the world, and the flesh? Or is it more exhausting and fatiguing to fulfil the duties of life piously, heartily, and as unto the Lord, than to perform them with a carnal, worldly, and graceless spirit? If you will only abandon sloth and indolence, vice and frivolity, and redeem time from idleness and uselessness, the most toil-worn and laborious of all the children of Adam have ample leisure for all the exercises of piety, and the cultivation of every grace and virtue necessary to bring you to the enjoyment of the gospel, and place you in the world of glory. Heaven already encloses many who found their way to its blissful regions from situations equal in distraction and drudgery to any to which we can be subjected.

Do you tell me that you have no desire to have any thing to do with religion? that you hate it, and are determined, whatever be the consequences in the world to come, to live a gay and merry life, and enjoy yourselves while you are able?

I have no doubt that you hate religion, for the carnal mind is enmity against God. But the question is not, Do you love, or hate religion? but do you need it? Can you be happy without it? Can you, by your own strength, scale the heaven of heavens, and secure everlasting blessedness, not only without the consent, but in spite of the authority and power of Omnipotence? If you could extinguish your existence—if at death you could annihilate your soul, or prevent it.

from entering eternity, then you might let religion alone, and give yourselves no concern about your everlasting welfare. But when you know that you must soon die; that after death cometh the judgment, and that all who are not meet for the kingdom of God, shall be sent away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; can any infatuation be more gross and ruinous than to neglect the glorious gospel, and disregard the things belonging to your never-ending peace?

In many things we are left to our own free and unfettered inclination. If we dislike the toils of literature, we may betake ourselves to the pursuits of commerce, or the labour of our hands. If we have an aversion to the stillness of the country we may plunge into the noise and bustle of the town. But there are some matters in which we have no choice. In a mortal malady we must either take the specific or die. On the field of battle we must either fight or be slain. In a storm the seaman must either work his vessel or go to the bottom. In the deluge there was no alternative but either to enter the ark or be drowned. And when by nature we are sick or dying, and the gospel is the only antidote to our fatal disorder, if we neglect it we must sink into everlasting death. We are on the field of battle, where ignorance, guilt, and depravity are mowing their millions down. If we refuse to encounter them with the weapons of God, we must soon fall before their artillery, and be hurled into endless destruction. The deluge of wrath is descending; the tempest is begun; and if we delay to take refuge on

board the ark of mercy, we shall be swept away by the tide of vengeance.

And will you prefer eternal ruin to a shelter near the side of the Son of God? Will you choose a place in the world of wo, rather than a seat on the throne of light, and a share in the bliss and transports of heaven? There is no alternative betwixt the gospel and endless perdition. There are many transactions in which only a few are concerned, and with which others have nothing to do. But there are some events that are general, which include the whole, and leave none neutral. There were none of the inhabitants of Sodom allowed to view the flight of Lot, and the conflagration of the city. There were none out of the ark left to contemplate the ravages of the deluge. None of us are permitted to speak of death as a personage with whom we have no concern. He is an enemy with whom each of us must grapple. And will there be any idle spectators of the proceedings of the day of judgment? When the faithful repair to the house of prayer, swarthy loungers are peeping at them from behind their windows, doors, and hedges, and meeting them on their return with their insipid interrogatories about who preached, and whose banns were proclaimed. But in the great day of decision will any lookers-on be left to gaze with indifference on the scene? Will the swarthy and tawdry parents be able to snatch their children in their arms, and point out to them the parties that pass in the procession? Will the boys and girls be able to gratify their curiosity by standing listlessly by

and marking the appearance of the groups advancing to the tribunal of justice? Will the turbulent and censorious be able to glut their malignity and envy at the mortification and confusion of those who are banished from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, and go exulting round, and tell how the Judge unmasked the duplicity of the hypocrites, and how severely he repaid the proud and selfish, the cruel and oppressive? The transactions of that dread day are too wide and comprehensive to leave any idle spectator of the tremendous scene. Amidst the innumerable multitudes who shall surround the throne of judgment, each must bear his own burden. Every transgressor shall mourn apart; and instead of glorying in the disgrace and misery of their brethren, the most careless and hardened now will be distracted and overwhelmed with the weight of his own sorrows.

But besides you who are idle, I must address a few words to

2. The mischievous.

You are busy—you are active and restless; but are you building up the temple of the Lord? Are you working out your own salvation? Are you extending the reign of religion and of righteousness? adding to the beauty and stability of the church of God? and labouring to win souls to the adorable Redeemer? You are busy; but it is to throw down the work of God—to counteract the designs of redeeming mercy, and retain the world in delusion and wretchedness. You are busy;

but it is to extend and establish the ravages of impiety and vice, to recruit for the prince of darkness, and crowd the regions of horror and despair. No man can be saved without piety—without deep seriousness—without earnest persevering zeal in religion, and entire devotedness of heart and life to God. For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. But what are your occupations and pursuits? Are you conducting our Sabbath schools, and supporting our religious institutions? Are you striving to instruct the ignorant, and convert the graceless? Are you giving yourselves to prayer, shining in the beauties of holiness, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness? You are living without God, and without Christ in the world. You hate all that is serious, and burlesque all that is sacred. You are drinking and swearing, debauching the young, and confirming the hardened, enticing your companions to forsake the sanctuary, to walk about with you, or frequent the tavern on Sabbath; and some of you making a gain of retailing to others the intoxicating draught by which they are hurried on to violate the laws of God and of man, and rush to everlasting ruin.

Can you say that you are building on the foundation laid in Zion, and making your calling and election sure? If throwing down be the same as building up; if the road to hell be the same as that to heaven; if the service of Satan be the same as the service of God: then you may be building on the faith of the gospel; you may be on the way to everlasting bliss, and enrolled amongst the

servants of the Most High. But if darkness be different from light—if death be different from life, and the way to destruction different from the path of salvation: you are on the way to endless ruin. You cannot see peace. The face of God is set against you; and amongst all the objects of his displeasure, there are none who shall encounter a more awful amount of his indignation. “If judgment first begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” You may now laugh at the warning, and boast of your mirth, your gains, and your mischief: but the day is at hand when you will most sincerely wish that, on the hour when you sold the first glass of strong drink—on the hour when you swore your first oath, and poured out the first language of filth and blasphemy—on the hour when you first sneered at religion, and reviled the characters of the faithful: you shall wish that a mill-stone had been hanged about your neck, and that you had been cast into the deeps of the sea.

Let me entreat you to lay these facts to heart, and, whilst the God of mercy waits to be gracious, flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you.

We shall now address—

II. Those who are building; who are busy and active about religion, and think that they are sure of eternal life.

These may be divided into three classes;

1. Those who are knowingly and deliberately building on a foundation of their own.

2. Those who are building on a foundation of their own, while they imagine that they are building on the Rock of Ages.

3. Those who are building on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Those who are knowingly and deliberately building on a foundation of their own.

You know that something is necessary for the salvation of your soul. You are sensible that this is a matter of too great importance to be left to chance or accident. You are cultivating a life of morality and virtue. You are laboriously and painfully rearing, on the foundations of your own worth and goodness, an edifice which you expect will defend you from all the evils of time, and ensure to you the dignities and delights of a safe and triumphant immortality. But however lofty and magnificent your superstructure, it rests on a rotten and mouldering basis; and on the first shock of the stormy elements of eternity it will crumble into dust, and bury you in its ruins.

The first step in the religion of a sinner is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. From the moment that we embrace the gospel, that we believe on the Son of God, we are safe. Our honour is exalted, and our inheritance is unbounded. We are the children of God, and all things are ours.

But while destitute of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,

we are without God and without hope. We are of our father the devil. We are at an infinite distance from God, and all the perfections of his nature are placed betwixt us and everlasting happiness. Jesus has a name above every name, that to him every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is the Lord, to the glory of the Father. The Father has commanded all to hear, to receive, to embrace his Son. They who will not have Christ to reign over them, shall be taken and slain before his face. Before, therefore, you can, in a state of unbelief, or without union to the Lord Jesus Christ, scale the heaven of heavens, or enjoy a single spiritual blessing, what a task have you to perform? You must dry up the blood of the Son of God. You must deprive the Holy Ghost of his grace and consolations. You must strip Jehovah of his justice, trample his holiness under foot, wrest the sceptre of creation from his grasp, and dash in pieces the throne on which he sits.

Such is the mighty and dreadful task to which you are committed; while, ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, you go about to establish a title to the divine favour upon the number or the excellence of your own performances. And is this an undertaking which you are able to accomplish?

You admit the obligation and value of justice and honesty, of sincerity and truth, of temperance and sobriety, of kindness and beneficence. You are alarmed and agitated when your virtuous resolutions are broken, and when you are betrayed into any gross and flagrant trans-

gression. But you never sink into sorrow nor shake with fear because you have refused to believe on Him whom God hath sent. If you have a moral and respectable life, you give yourselves no concern for the want of faith on the Son of God.

Now, we grant that a virtuous life is excellent and admirable. We never can cultivate morality with too much diligence, nor abound too much in humanity and beneficence. But the question is not, Are good works useful and valuable? but, Are they the ground of our acceptance with God? Are they the cause of our salvation? Brass may be serviceable as a medium of circulation, or as an ornament to our furniture; but it cannot be employed as an article of food. And though good works are invaluable as the effects of faith, as evidences of grace, and as a qualification for the enjoyment of heaven: after we are told that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified, that as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; can our good works save us? After we are assured that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us; that he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; neither is there salvation in any other: can our duties and virtues open to us the path of life, or seat us on the throne of heaven? We can perform no works really good, till the heart is made good. Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? What was the worth of the sacrifices of Saul, the prophecies of Balaam, the prayers of the Pharisees, or the preaching of

Judas, while their hearts were in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity? And as long as your mind is alienated from God, and destitute of the renewing of the Holy Ghost; what can all your outward virtues avail?

If you expect that the justice of God will reward your good works, must not the same justice punish your evil deeds? And since in every thing we offend, what must be your eternal state if you continue to trust in your own righteousness?

But while you have no good works on which to rely, I must add that, in the single sin of neglecting the great salvation, there is guilt sufficient to sink you into the deeps of perdition. When we are told that this is the work of God—that we believe on him whom he hath sent; when he says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him,” can we describe or conceive the guilt and danger of disregarding the authority of the Most High, and despising Him who is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person? When Jesus Christ is the unspeakable gift of God, and the sufferings and sacrifice of a person of his divine dignity and eternal glory are infinitely superior to the bounties of providence and the treasures of creation; can you conceive or utter the criminality and baseness of rejecting or undervaluing the salvation of the gospel?

Little, little do you know of your dreadful situation and danger, who are alarmed and agitated about your drunkenness and debauchery, your fraud and falsehood, but feel no remorse, and entertain no fear for neglecting

and despising the great salvation. Since the day that Jesus died, this is the greatest atrocity that a creature can perpetrate. By rejecting the blessings purchased by the death of the Redeemer, you insult the knowledge of God by declaring that this contrivance of infinite wisdom was absolutely needless, and you offer an indignity to his goodness by proclaiming that his best gift is not worth your acceptance. Through eternity Satan never can show such despite to the wisdom and goodness of the Most High. A divine, infinite, and all-sufficient Saviour will never be in his offer. Tempests of wrath may agitate the fiery deluge on which he floats. The trumpet of judgment may shake the world of wo; but no messenger of mercy shall ever appear in these lurid abodes, nor any sound of salvation be heard amid its ceaseless shrieks and lamentations.

Let me conjure you while the calls and invitations of the blessed gospel are still ringing in your ears, instantly to embrace its merciful provisions, and lay hold on its rich and invaluable blessings. When you consider the divine dignity and infinite power and majesty of Immanuel, and reflect on the depth of his abasement and the intensity of his sufferings, calmly and deliberately say, if hell can punish too severely the sin of neglecting the atonement of the cross? Can the hand of Omnipotence inflict a doom too tremendous on your careless and unfeeling soul, which disregards all the momentous purposes of his death? While you are living at your ease without having received the Lord Jesus Christ;

though you were free from every other offence, the single sin of neglecting the Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient to sink your soul, even though it were beyond the worth of ten thousand worlds, into the deeps of perdition.

The heart is deceitful above all things. Satan is master of every species of subtlety, and he employs all his ingenuity to pervert and mislead unwary souls to their everlasting ruin. The men of whom we have just now been speaking, openly and avowedly disregard the Lord Jesus Christ, and despise his precious gospel. But there is another class as pitiable and wretched.

2. These are the men who believe that they are trusting in the great Redeemer, when, in fact, they are depending on their own righteousness for acceptance with God.

A wise builder will not lay the foundation of a magnificent and expensive edifice on snow or sand, on moss or rubbish. He will employ any expense or trouble to reach a rock, or secure a firm and solid basis for his fabric. He will not fix a single stone till he find that he has ground beneath him capable of sustaining the edifice which he wishes to rear. And when the soul is our all, will a Christian who has an endless existence before him, and a holy God above him—who knows the greatness of the Divine power, and the value of his immortal interests, place his hope and confidence on any thing that cannot support and save him? No; he digs deep, and lays his foundation well. He will never rest till he reach the Rock of Ages, and repose the weight of his dependence

and trust on the foundation laid in Zion. He cannot enjoy a moment's peace till he find Christ in the arms of his faith, and occupying and filling all the desires and affections of his heart. In every ordinance and exercise he seeks communion with Jesus: and the best and fairest are utterly unprofitable and vain, unless he is blessed with fellowship with him whom his soul loves. His services and labours are undertaken in obedience to the will of Christ, and unreservedly consecrated to his interest and honour. His knowledge, experience, and attainments are all renounced for the sake of the Redeemer, and he has no peace nor rest till he win Christ, and be found in him. In religion Jesus is the first and the last, the beginning and ending. He is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is all in all. And we are never safe till we relinquish all for his sake—till we cleave to him simply, trust in him entirely, and from the heart say, In the Lord have we righteousness and strength.

But instead of adopting this scriptural procedure, what are multitudes doing? They are unconsciously indeed, but most earnestly striving to supersede the righteousness of Christ. They are labouring to shut him out of their system. They are trying to prove that his death was superfluous. And while they have a show of piety, the only use of their religion is to keep their souls at a distance from the Saviour, and make their destruction more certain and severe.

Some of you may ask, How can a man's religion ruin

him? Is not religion the only means by which we can be saved? How, then, can it ensure our destruction, or contribute to our perdition? The religion of God, the religion of the Bible will save all who embrace it. But a religion of our own invention, a religion which sets aside and nullifies the religion of God will never save a single soul, but infallibly destroy all who are resting on it. The brazen serpent erected by the appointment of God, healed all the stung Israelites who looked at it. But if every tribe or family had reared a brazen serpent for themselves, would these have produced the same miraculous effects? The ark which God enjoined to be prepared saved Noah and his household; but would he have found the same safety in a vessel of his own contrivance? The gospel ensures eternal happiness to all who embrace it. "He that believeth shall be saved." But if we neglect the gospel, and have recourse to fancies and notions of our own, will they save us? Had the Pharisees no religion? They had much religion. They made long prayers. They paid tithes of all they possessed. They fasted twice in the week. They compassed sea and land to make one proselyte. But did their religion render them any useful service? It contributed to lull them asleep in fatal security, and to make their perdition more certain and severe. And to the present day the religion of many accomplishes no other object than the religion of the Pharisees. It conceals from them their guilt and danger. It inspires them with false and delusive confidence. It keeps them back from the Redeemer. In-

stead of shutting them up unto the faith, it leads them to reject the only source of salvation, and cling to a refuge of lies. Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they refuse to submit to the righteousness of Christ.

Do any inquire, Who are in this deplorable and wretched condition? I reply that this is the case with all

(1.) Who are trusting to your profession of Christianity.

You may be aware of the impossibility of obtaining salvation by abandoning your gross immoralities, and becoming decent and respectable in your behaviour. But when you hear of so many promises given to them who pray, search the Scriptures, sanctify the Sabbath, and attend on the ordinances of the gospel, you commence secret prayer—you set up family worship—you keep holy the Sabbath, attend the preaching of the word, and apply for admission to the Lord's table, and then conclude that you must necessarily be in a state of grace.

But though these things are all excellent in themselves, and of the greatest importance and value when they flow from a new heart and a right spirit, when they are performed from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and from deep adoring gratitude for the wonders of redeeming love, what is their worth as long as your heart is carnal or unclean? What signified the prophecies of Balaam, or the preaching of Judas, while they themselves were dead in trespasses and sins? And what is the value of all your religious observances while you yourselves are

unsanctified and in the bond of iniquity? Will God admit them as a substitute for the righteousness of Christ, and allow them to set aside the atonement of his Son?

(2) You who are relying upon your zeal and extraordinary acts of devotion.

You have attended the ablest ministers—you have read the best books—you have made yourselves masters of the Christian system; and while you have adopted a form of sound words, you contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—you associate with the most pious professors—you multiply your religious duties—you lengthen your prayers, observe secret fasts, and bind yourselves by solemn vows to be wholly God's.

These things are all most commendable when they are adopted to make the soul feel its weakness, emptiness, and pollution, to discover more of our filth and depravity, and compel us to lean more simply and unreservedly on the righteousness, grace, and all-sufficiency of the Saviour. But what can these services avail when they are undertaken and performed either to set aside the unspeakable gift of God? or from the hope that they will constitute part of our justifying righteousness?

(3.) You who are depending on your future reformation and improvement.

You are conscious that you are chargeable with many past defects and offences. But you are now in more favourable circumstances than ever. You have obtained more knowledge and experience—you have secured the

society of a pious neighbour—you have procured a supply of excellent books, or are favoured with an eloquent and able minister. If God will only have a little patience, you are now sure that you will soon pay him all. You will be far more strict and watchful than formerly—you will pray more frequently and fervently—you will subscribe to every religious society, and assist in every humane and benevolent undertaking.

But is this the foundation laid in Zion? Will the punctuality of your future payments discharge your past arrears? or your obedience to the Divine law in time to come atone for your past transgressions?

(4.) You who have recourse to Christ, not for salvation, but for help.

You acknowledge that you can do only a little, and that little is very feebly and imperfectly done. Still, however, you imagine that you can do something, and you are resolved to do your best; and you hope that then Christ will cover your iniquities, and supply all your defects.

Now is this to be shut up to the faith? Is this counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ? This is to place the principal stress of your confidence upon your own performances, and to have recourse to the righteousness of Christ only when they fail. And is this such conduct as he will approve and bless? Will you lend money to your bankrupt adversary to carry on a process to deprive you of your legal rights, and eject you from your possessions? And when

in religion Jesus Christ is all in all; when he is the way, the truth, and the life; when no man can come to the Father but by him, will he allow you to engross or even share the honour of your salvation? "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord;" and he will not give his glory to another.

(5.) You who are forming treaties and stipulations with Christ.

You know that you are criminal and guilty; but if he will only forgive your past transgressions, and accept you as you are, you will be his servants for ever, and will amply repay him for all his generosity and kindness. You will do such wonders in his work—you will be such a treasure in your family, and such a blessing to the church and the world, that you will soon and abundantly requite all the favour which he can show you.

But pray, is a gift the same as a purchase? Are the blessings of salvation set up to sale? Has God promised to dispose of the treasures of his grace to the highest bidder? Are the calls and invitations of the gospel addressed to the good, the virtuous, the devout, and those who can give a price for its provisions? Its language is, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him buy wine and milk without money and without price. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Thy money

perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money.

(6.) You who are confiding in your sincere though imperfect obedience.

You find that you cannot keep the commandments of God perfectly. Every man has his weakness, and you cannot pretend that you are better than your neighbours. You have your infirmities and frailties, but you are willing to do what you can. The demands of the law are perfectly reasonable and just. You admire and love it, and would rejoice if you could keep it perfectly. But this you cannot do. But, like an honest bankrupt, you will do your utmost. And a God of mercy will surely accept the will for the deed, and allow your sincere to stand for perfect obedience.

But are you sure that your obedience is sincere? Are you doing your best? and exerting yourselves to the utmost? While the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, you will find that sincere is as scarce an article as perfect obedience.

But supposing that your obedience were sincere, where is your security for its acceptance? Is this to be found in the declaration, "As many as are of the deeds of the law are under a curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?" The Lord Jesus Christ admits no composition betwixt faith and works, grace and law. If you have recourse to him, you must renounce every thing besides; but if you betake yourselves to the

law in any form, you must stand or fall by the law. As many of you as seek to be justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace. Rom. iv. 14, 16; xi. 6; ix. 32.

(7.) You who are expecting salvation because your own piety and worth have recommended you to the Saviour.

You dare not trust wholly to your own goodness. You are sensible that in many things you have offended, and in a matter of such ineffable importance as your eternal welfare, you do not like to expose yourselves to any risk. You therefore think it advisable to have recourse to the Redeemer, to prevent any danger of disappointment. But why do you trust in the Saviour? Is this on account of the all-sufficiency of his atonement? the universal calls, and the free invitations of the gospel? No; you are encouraged to trust in Christ because you have not been like other men; you have been neither profane nor profligate; you have been sober, honest, and decent; you have been familiar with the Scriptures; you have attended ordinances; you have been the friend and advocate of religion and morality, and therefore you hope that Christ will not place you on a level with abandoned criminals and gross transgressors.

But, my dear friends, is this to come to him in the character of sinners that possess no good thing? that are undone and deserving to perish? Is this to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ? Remember that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost; not to call the righteous

but sinners to repentance. "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."

Take heed lest ye also fall after the same example of ignorance, legality, and unbelief.

In these, and in various other forms, the souls of thousands, and tens of thousands have been deluded to their everlasting ruin. They have mistaken the shadow for the substance. They have built on the sand, and not on the foundation laid in Zion. And their end has been according to their work. Their false and spurious religion has led them to reject the gospel. By trusting to a refuge of lies, they have disregarded the Rock of Ages, remained at a distance from the adorable Redeemer, deprived themselves of all the riches of his grace, and the blessings of his salvation, have shut themselves out of the kingdom of heaven, and made their destruction sure.

Let us now bespeak the attention,

3. Of the wise and cautious builders.

A wise builder, when he is going to rear an expensive and magnificent edifice, will not commence operations upon snow, moss, or sand. He will clear away every impediment and obstruction, and never lay a stone till he has reached a rock, or firm and solid ground.

The soul is our all. If ever a creature required a strong and stable foundation for his edifice, it is a sinner. Our building must last for ever and ever. The foundation must support the whole weight of our

spiritual and eternal welfare. And will any ordinary prop or support suffice for such a matchless and important purpose? Nothing less can suit our case than the Rock of Ages, the foundation laid in Zion. This possesses every property which we need or can desire. It is broad and spacious, and capable of containing all our interests. It is firm and solid, and able to resist every shock, to sustain our souls in safety, and give them salvation with eternal glory.

But while in Jesus all fulness dwells, and he can save to the uttermost and save for ever, there is salvation in no other. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now, how are we to reach this rock and build on this foundation? We never can reach this rock till every obstruction and impediment is removed. We never can build on this foundation till all things are renounced for the sake of Christ, till we embrace him simply, and cleave to him entirely. A graft cannot unite with the stock as long as any substance intervenes. And a soul can never close with the Lord Jesus Christ as long as it relies in the slightest degree on its good works or good intentions. No matter whether we are confiding in our religious profession, our extraordinary exercises of piety, our past performances, our future services, our sincere obedience, or our benevolent designs: in any of these cases we are leaning to our own righteousness. We are seeking salvation, as it were, by the works of the law,

and not by faith. In such a case Christ will profit us nothing

(1.) In order to build with safety on this foundation, you must trust for your acceptance before God; simply to the righteousness of Christ.

At creation we were to have been justified solely by our obedience. By doing the things which were contained in the law, we were to have enjoyed eternal life. But the law is now broken: all have sinned: the wages of sin are death: and, therefore, as we are sinners and deserving death, salvation by our own obedience is impossible. By the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified. No man can be at once a sinner and righteous, any more than a glass can be perfectly whole at the time that it is broken. Since, therefore, all have sinned, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.

But what the law cannot accomplish has been secured in another manner. God has laid our help upon his Son. Christ has magnified the law and made it honourable. He has finished transgression, and made an end of offerings for sin; he has taken away the sin of the world; he has borne our iniquities, and carried our sorrows; he is the propitiation for sin; he is the Lord our righteousness; he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

Now, when he is called the propitiation for sin—the Saviour of the world—the Lord our righteousness; how much atonement has he made for sin? how much salvation has he wrought out? how much righteousness has

he secured? These questions may be answered by others. When he calls himself the light of the world—the resurrection and the life; what proportion of light does he impart? what quantity of life does he bestow? and how far will he raise the dead? If natural men have discovered any of the truths revealed in the gospel; if the creature can concur in its own formation, and the dead raise themselves or co-operate in their own resurrection, then the sinner may save himself, or contribute to his own justification. But if the gospel is all the revelation of Jesus Christ; if natural and spiritual life are his gift, and the resurrection of the body is his work; then when he is declared to be the propitiation for sin, and the Lord our righteousness, this is because he has borne the punishment of our transgressions, and we have righteousness in him alone. We have redemption through his blood. We are justified freely by his grace, and in this act of his holy sovereign power we neither can be his counsellors nor coadjutors.

Now, you can never build on the foundation laid in Zion till you understand and believe this precious fact. It is necessary that you should know that the ground of your acceptance before God consists in the person and work of Immanuel, and that this work of his was completed ages before you were born. You have destroyed yourselves. By nature you are the children of disobedience and wrath. You naturally are sinners and ungodly. In you there dwelleth no good thing. You

never can have redemption except through the blood of Christ. It is only through his righteousness that you can be made righteous. He who had no sin was made a sacrifice for sin, that we who have no righteousness of our own might be made the righteousness of God in him. In the same manner that Christ, without any sin of his own, was subjected to the same sufferings as if in his own person he had committed our sins, we who have no righteousness of our own are accepted as completely righteous before God as if in our own persons we had wrought out the righteousness of the Redeemer.

Whenever you understand and believe this, whatever talents or attainments you possess, whatever labours you may have accomplished or services you may have performed, you will renounce the whole for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the case with Paul. And in the matter of justification all must be like-minded with him, and say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith." You will remember that you are made righteous through the righteousness of another, and rendered comely through his comeliness put upon you. Your

own good deeds and good designs can no more secure your acceptance with God than the weight of a feather can contribute to the stability of the globe.

(2.) From what motive do you perform good works? Is this to recommend you to God? to attract his notice? or repay his generosity and goodness for the blessings of his saving mercy? You strive to be holy and unblameable before him in love, from attachment to his person, and gratitude for the immense and unsearchable riches of his grace. Blessings so multiplied and unbounded completely overpower your feelings, and fill your soul with adoring delight and wonder. Language cannot express the admiration you entertain, nor eternity repay the debt of affection and obedience that you owe. The love of Christ constrains you. You are so delighted with his person, and so enraptured with his grace, that you cannot keep back your heart from him. You are steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in his work, because your happiness depends upon your diligence in his service, and devotedness to his honour. He engages and engrosses your affections, and you would be miserable if you were interrupted in his service, or compelled to let his work alone.

(3.) Why do you bear your trials with patience and resignation? and manifest such a degree of calmness and submission under disappointment and trouble? Is this to atone for your offences? or render some satisfaction to justice for your repeated and heinous violations

of the divine law? You know that the tears of penitence, and the blood of martyrdom cannot expiate one deed of guilt, nor all the rivers on earth, and all the fountains in creation wash out one stain of sin. This is a task which baffles the universe, and for which nothing less than the blood of the Son of God is equal. But you exercise patience and resignation under all your sufferings and sorrows, to mark the reality of your repentance, to prove the sincerity and depth of your contrition, and show your deliberate and cordial approbation of the Divine will. "I was dumb: I opened not my mouth because thou didst it. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done."

(4.) Why do you frequent the ordinances of religion, and employ the means of grace? Is this for any selfish end or legal purpose? Is this to establish a claim to the Divine regard, and purchase a title to eternal life? You detest such a thought. You attend religious ordinances and exercises to see Jesus, to hold communion with God, to secure nearness to him whom your soul loves, to promote your conformity to the image of Christ, and enjoy a meetness for heaven, and a foretaste of its bliss. However mean the outward institution, or however feeble the instrument, if you are blessed with fellowship with God, you have enough. But take Christ out of the arms of your faith, and withdraw his presence from the

ordinauces of the gospel, though you were honoured with the society of an angel, and the ministry of an apostle, you would be poor and miserable.

(5.) Why do you observe your frames, and watch your feelings? Is this to strengthen the foundations of your faith, or mark the rise or fall of the Divine favour? Your faith rests on the Rock of Ages. Creation cannot shake its stability, nor the whole universe increase its strength. And the Divine favour is founded on the person and work of Immanuel, which are infinite and all-sufficient, and incapable of alteration or improvement. But you observe your frames, and watch your feelings, to mark the state of your heart, and discover your religious progress, to see if you entertain suitable views of the glory and grace of the Lord Jesus, and are rendering to him according to the innumerable and immense blessings which he has bestowed. The health of a passenger has no influence upon the strength or direction of the ship, but it has a great effect upon his own ease and enjoyment. The sickness of Noah would have distressed his family and destroyed his own comfort; but it could not have sunk the ark nor endangered the safety of any whom it contained. The agitation, the alarm, and the fear of the faithful may disturb their peace and mar their comforts, but they cannot ruin their souls nor prevent their everlasting welfare. When once we are joined to the Lord Jesus we are kept not by our own strength, but by the power of God through faith unto salvation. He

rests in his love. He hateth putting away. But our duty is to look well to our ways, that we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God our Saviour, and build ourselves up in our most holy faith.

SERMON XI.

THE CELESTIAL VISITOR.

REVELATION iii. 20.

“ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

NOTHING is so perverse and inexplicable, as the treatment which the irreligious give to our divine and adorable Redeemer. Let a man of wealth and of fame, a peer or a prince make a call of kindness at the cottage of a peasant, every foot eagerly runs to open the door—every countenance welcomes his approach—every voice cordially invites his entrance; the best which the habitation possesses is produced for his entertainment, and many a regret is felt that they can afford him a reception no more suited to his rank, and expressive of their esteem and gratitude.

They will talk with ecstasy of the visit: they will carefully treasure up his sayings: they will minutely describe his looks and his actions, and regard the day that

brought him to their dwelling as the highest and happiest of their lives.

But what is a peer or a prince, a man of science and of fame, compared with the Son of God and the Lord of glory, maker of all yon worlds, and preserver of all that the wide creation contains? What are the tidings which they can bring, compared with the intelligence which Jesus announces? or the favours which they can bestow, with the vast, the unbounded benefits and blessings he comes to confer? Their gifts are trifling in magnitude and limited in duration. They refer to the body. They cannot strengthen nor elevate the heart, pierce the world of spirits, nor command the honours and joys of immortality. But Jesus comes to exalt and ennoble our character; to take away transgression; to set the captive free; to remove our pain and poverty; to enrich our souls with treasures invaluable and divine; and fill and feast our hearts with blessings which raise us to the dignity of angels, and last for ever and ever.

Now, what is the reception which he obtains? Let him present himself in a congregation, in a family, or knock at the door of a sinner's heart, and what is the treatment which he experiences? Does every eye sparkle with joy at his approach? Does every voice hail his appearance, and with ecstasy say, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? Men are averse to his presence. The heart is closed against his entrance. It is firmly barred against his admission, and he is left without to solicit access. Hear

how he speaks of his treatment, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Take notice

I. Of the insensibility and obstinacy of the careless and irreligious.

II. The patience, condescension, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The blessed consequences of complying with his calls.

I. The insensibility and obstinacy of the careless and irreligious.

They resist the offers of mercy; they reject the counsel of God against themselves; they close their hearts against the entrance of their adorable Redeemer and Lord. For unless this is the case, why is he obliged to take his station without, and stand, and knock, and cry for admission?

Now, is there any reason why men should be so shy of his company, and so averse to his presence? so eager to shun his acquaintance and repel his approach? Have they any cause of alarm from his presence, or any ground of dread from his entrance? Does he come as a thief and a robber, to steal, and devour, and destroy; to strip you of your treasures, and deprive you of your comforts and joys? Does he come to tease and torment you with his toils and his tasks, to defraud you of your wages, and subject you to vexation, anguish, and broken-heartedness—to exhaust your fortunes by extravagance and folly, to corrupt your families by vice and impiety, to ruin your

health and shorten your lives by dissipation and debauchery? Does he come to strip you of your temporal welfare, and accumulate upon your heads the horrors of eternal misery?

These dreadful tasks he leaves to your adversaries and enemies—to Satan and his legions. Jesus comes on the wings of love, with a countenance beaming with benignity—with a heart overflowing with beneficence—with a voice publishing mercy, and hands scattering the blessings of grace. He comes to save and bless you; to rescue you from hell and ruin, and raise you to heaven and glory; to deliver you from the horrors of condemnation and the distractions of eternal wo, and put you in possession of the honours of celestial bliss, and the transports of boundless and immortal joy.

And are these objects of alarm and aversion? Does the debtor tremble at the approach of his generous benefactor, who comes to discharge his arrears, and send him forth to light and liberty? Does the poor patient, exhausted with pining sickness, or racked with torturing pain, deprecate the presence of his kind and skilful physician, who comes to remove his maladies, brace his limbs with strength and vigour, and send him back to the duties and enjoyments of his station?

And when Jesus comes to save and bless us; comes to enrich us with the treasures of his grace; and put us in full possession of all the mercies of the everlasting covenant, and all the immense and inexhaustible resources of salvation and glory: why do men turn a deaf ear to

his admonitions, reject the riches of his grace, and spurn the invitations of his generosity and tenderness?

Some, perhaps, may tell us that they never saw the face nor heard the voice of Jesus. Were he to appear in person, to present himself in their families or congregation, none of all the sons of Adam would be more glad to see him, nor more ready to give him an instant and cordial welcome. But thirty, forty, or threescore summers have passed over their heads; they have attended scores of sacraments, heard hundreds of sermons, and said some thousands of prayers. But though they have seen many men and listened to many a sermon, one glance of Immanuel they never saw, nor one word of the Son of God did they ever hear. God forbid that they should shut their hearts against the Saviour, and keep the adorable Redeemer standing without!

But what, my dear friends, do you suppose the Son of God is like? How is it that Jesus comes to the children of men? In what form does he address himself to your hearts? Do you suppose that when he comes he is to rend the heavens, shake the earth, lift up his voice in thunder, and fill the surrounding creation with the brightness of his glory?

Multitudes imagine that Jesus can never visit them unless he comes in the splendours of Divinity, and in the majesty and lustre of the Godhead.

But have you not heard that he is never far from any one of us? that his ordinances and laws are given as a sign betwixt him and us? that wherever he records his

name there he meets with his people? that he is in his temple? that we are ambassadors for Christ? that he that receiveth us receiveth him? but he that despiseth us despiseth him. Every time that you have seen a Bible, every time you have enjoyed the light of a Sabbath's sun, every time that you have bent the knee in family devotion, that you have heard the accents of religious counsel and admonition, that you have heard the sound of the church-going bell, that you have seen a minister in the pulpit, or listened to the words of eternal life; the Son of God and Lord of glory has taken his place at the door of your hearts, lifted up his blessed and lovely voice and said, Behold I stand at the door and knock.

And will you maintain that you have never seen his shape nor heard his voice? In that dread day, when he shall lay judgment to the line, will you be able to lift up a calm and unblushing front in his presence, and tell him in a firm unfaltering tone, that, in walking his ample rounds of beneficence and mercy, you were overlooked and forgotten? the door of your heart was kept daily and constantly open, but he never approached it? you prayed for his arrival, but he neglected to come near you? the message of reconciliation and of peace was sent to them afar off, and to them who were near, but the glad tidings of salvation were never proclaimed in your ears, nor the means of eternal life placed within your reach? that the invitations of the gospel were never laid in your path, nor a single application made to your understandings or your hearts? From all the bibles with

which our land is stored, and all the ministers of religion regularly and earnestly labouring to bring men to the knowledge and obedience of the truth, have you never once been told of the right and the claim which the Lord Jesus possesses to your heart and soul, to your time and strength? Have you never once been told that to be carnally-minded is death, and that they who are far from God shall perish? Have you never once heard that God so loved the world that he has given his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish? Have you never heard that we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins? Have you never had a free and unqualified offer of this all-sufficient righteousness, nor an affectionate and urgent invitation to accept the blessings bought and sealed on Calvary? Have you never once been warned to flee from the wrath to come, nor exhorted to lay hold on the hope set before you?

The Lord God of gods he knoweth, and your hearts and souls know, that, so far from being overlooked and forgotten by the God of love, you have been cloyed, sickened, and disgusted with the means of grace. You have been unable to move a step without meeting with some memorial of your Redeemer, and being more forcibly reminded of the riches of his goodness, and the infinite obligations which you owe to his love. Every counsel of kindness from a friend or relative—every remonstrance of conscience against your carelessness and security, every Sabbath as it returned—every sermon

you have heard or might have heard—every sentence of the Bible which you read, have all been so many instances in which the Lord of glory has come preaching peace to you who were afar off, and in which he has stood at the door of your hearts and knocked, saying, “If you will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in.”

But if some groundlessly maintain that the Lord Jesus Christ, in his endless walks of beneficence and mercy, has never given them an invitation or call, others, with equal groundlessness, imagine that they have heard his voice, opened the door, and let him in. “We all have received him. We believe in his name, profess his religion, attend his ordinances, and occasionally do a kind and generous action. We may not be so pious and zealous as we ought. We may at times do some things to offend and grieve him. But God forbid that we should shut him out of our hearts, and keep him standing and knocking in vain at the door. We have no enmity to his person, nor hatred to his cause. We love his friendship, and would like to go to heaven when we die. And can we be charged with excluding him from our hearts?”

My dear friends, our state in time, and our condition through eternity must be decided, not by our notions, opinions, and expectations, but according to our character and conduct. It is not the man who is loud and clamorous in his expressions of loyalty, but the man who loves his king, and obeys the laws, who is entitled to the praise of a good subject. It is not the man who is loud and

boisterous in commendation of literature and science who is intelligent and learned, but the man who loves learning, devotes himself to study, and employs his time in cultivating his powers, and enlarging the amount of his information. And, believe me, it is not the man that lives securely, that hopes confidently, and means well, that is in a state of safety and accepted in the Lord. Not he who esteemeth himself, but whom the Lord commendeth, is approved. Many that are first shall be last.

By nature Christ is out of the heart. For if he were within, what necessity would there be for standing at the door and knocking? If he were in us by nature, he might perhaps wish to go out, but he would have no occasion to solicit an entrance.

Since, then, by nature he is out, when did you admit him? Most people can remember when they received a visitor, when he arrived, and how long he stayed. Is Jesus such an insignificant and contemptible character that you took no notice of his entrance, that you cannot yet tell whether he is without or within? Does his presence create so little difference from his absence that you cannot tell whether you have him or want him? Is there any amongst the companions so like him that you cannot tell the difference betwixt them?

It is no easy thing for him to gain admission to the heart. It is closed against him through carelessness, sloth, indolence, worldliness, and carnality. His presence is shunned and detested. We naturally imagine

that it will disturb our peace and destroy our happiness. When he comes in the preaching of the word, or in the dispensations of Providence, we are terrified and tremble. We cry, Hast thou found us, O thou our enemy? What have we to do with thee, thou Holy One of God? art thou come to torment us before the time? We will not have him to reign over us.

Is it then an easy matter to be brought to submit to his authority, and surrender to him the possession and use of our hearts, our time, and strength? It is the last measure to which the natural mind will have recourse. Nothing less than divine power can accomplish it. When it is produced, forget it we will not, we cannot. It is the subject nearest to our hearts and uppermost in our esteem. We can sooner forget the day when we were delivered from the hands of an assassin—the day when we were rescued from a conflagration—the day when we were visited by our king and his family—the day when we were unexpectedly put in possession of a title and estate: than forget the day when the Son of God and Lord of glory entered our hearts, and established his throne within them. He translated you from the power of darkness; he brought along with him light, and joy, and liberty; he brought you out of darkness and the shadow of death, introduced you into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, admitted you into fellowship with himself, and gave you good hope through grace.

Now *when* did this take place? In infancy? in youth? in riper years? this year? last year? *when*?

How was it accomplished? By prosperity or adversity? By sickness, affliction, loss of kindred or friends? Was it by the reading of the Scriptures, the preaching of the Word, or by what?

Where was it effected? In the house or in the fields? at home or abroad? in the closet or the sanctuary?

What *effects* has it produced? Whenever real religion is produced, the man becomes a new creature. His heart is strongly and intensely set on God and things divine. Whom have I in heaven but thee? Angels and seraphim are there. My Christian brethren and kindred are there. My little infants, whose bodies I committed to the dust are there. Prophets, apostles, and martyrs are adoring around the throne. But whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Jesus is precious to his soul. He cannot live without him; he devotes himself to godliness and goodness, and after his utmost efforts, he is grieved, humbled, and ashamed that he has done so little, and keeps days of fasting and humiliation on account of his unprofitableness.

Is this the case with you?

Has your religion made you happy? There are immense treasures in the Lord Jesus Christ. These are all laid open to the enjoyment and use of his people. All things are theirs; they have all, and abound; they are complete in him; their felicity is so great that they are often going to him with full and grateful hearts, crying, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

If you have not admitted him into your hearts, why have you closed the door against him? Has he been shut out to make way for some better and nobler guest? Is there any more exalted than the Most High? more powerful than the Almighty? more great and glorious than the Infinite God? or able and willing to give you more than the bliss of heaven, the treasures of eternity, and the fulness of the All-sufficient? Yet Jesus is the Most High God—possessor of all things in heaven and in earth. He gives you all things freely to enjoy, and having not spared himself, how shall he not with himself freely give you all things?

And will you find room in your hearts for your farms and merchandise, and yet find none for your divine and adorable Redeemer? Will you throw open your houses and hearts to vanity and folly, to mirth and amusement, but close them against the riches of saving mercy, and all the honours and delights of boundless and never-ending glory? Is this your kindness to your friend? Do ye thus requite the Lord, ah! foolish and unwise?

How does Jesus treat those who shut the door against him, and turn a deaf ear to all the tender and affecting entreaties of his love? Does he turn on his heel, leave them to their fate, and swear in his wrath that they shall never taste of his supper, nor enter into his rest?

All this he might do : but be astonished, O heavens, and wonder, O earth, at

II. The kind, adorable condescension and grace of our divine Redeemer.

He does not turn away from us in wrath. He continues his applications, remonstrances, and calls. "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock."

In this language there is much to raise our admiration and administer the most salutary and momentous lessons.

When he says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," let me entreat you to observe that this expresses

1. The most amazing patience and forbearance.

On finding a cold and repulsive treatment, O my friends, what might we have reasonably apprehended from the injured Saviour, the insulted Son of God? Did a peer or a prince, any of the great and noble of the land, come to the cottage of a mechanic or labourer, who had offended them, in order to offer forgiveness, and restore him to kindness and favour; if he were to throw the door in their face, to prosecute his business or amusement, to burlesque their invitations, and turn all their entreaties into ridicule and scorn: they would soon desist from their importunity, and inflict on the rude and guilty creature the vengeance that is due.

But what are all the peers and potentates of the earth compared with the Son of God and the Lord of glory? and what is all the provocation which you can give them, compared with the dishonour which you heap upon his blessed name, and the despite which you do to the spirit

of grace by your sloth and insensibility, your cold-heartedness and carnality, by neglecting the great salvation, and despising the mighty and immense benefits secured and sealed by his blood? It is long since he presented himself at the door of our understanding and of our heart. It is long, long since he first cried, "Open to me, ye slothful drowsy souls. Awake, ye that sleep; arise from the dead, and I will give you light." It is long since, by acts of kindness, and deeds of compassion and generosity, he has been trying to win our affections, and secure our admiration and our love.

When, therefore, we treated his admonitions with carelessness and indifference, how might he have resented the affront, and left us to reap the bitter and dreadful fruits of our infatuation and folly? On meeting with such a shameful repulse, he might have turned away, and taken his departure for ever. He might have said, "The door is shut: and shall I stand here soliciting admission from creatures so mean, and criminals so vile and loathsome? With heaven for my dwelling, and all creation for mine inheritance, what honour can I gain from their friendship, or what advantage can I derive from a place in their hearts? They are only hovels, prisons, and sinks of pollution; and shall they have the rudeness to slight my invitations, and the baseness to exclude my entrance? I am no exile driven from my Father's house, and compelled to traverse creation for a shelter and home. I will go, and return unto my place: and in the arms of my Father, and amidst the riches of the universe, find my

rest and my joy. They are joined to their idols; let them alone."

In this manner he might have resented the insult, and after the first trifling with his gospel, and the first act of resistance against his Holy Spirit, he might have left us to perish in our sins. And if he had only pronounced these dreadful words, where, where would we this day have been? Where others who had been left to blindness of mind and hardness of heart, are subjected to weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

But he has not left us to perish in our sins. He has borne with our transgressions. He has pitied our weakness. He has had long patience with us, and amidst all our provocations and sins he has spared us to the present hour. He has lengthened out the time of your visitation. He has renewed the admonitions of his word, and the calls of his grace. He has given you line upon line, and precept upon precept. How long have some of you been made the monuments of his patience, forbearance, and mercy? The owner of the vineyard came three years seeking fruit on the fig tree. But some of you have compelled him to come not only three but thirteen, thirty, or threescore years, seeking fruit, and finding none. Who is it that has fed and clothed you all your lives to the present hour? Who has provided you with the comforts of life, and furnished you with the powers of your minds? Who has supplied your wants, and given you all things richly to enjoy? Who has done all these things? That God against whom you have sinned.

That Saviour whose goodness you have abused, and whose grace you have despised. For in him we all live, and move, and have our being.

When in infancy and youth you rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; when in maturer years you went on frowardly in the ways of your heart, and manifested the grossest contempt for the blessings which Jesus purchased with his blood; when in rage and madness you sinned against the Lord, and set his justice and his judgments at defiance, what withheld the thunderbolts of vengeance, and prevented you from being instantly hurled into the regions of everlasting darkness and despair? Did he want opportunity or power to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, and render a due recompense to your deeds?

What power can he want who wields the energies of Omnipotence—who speaks and it is done—who gives the command and all things stand fast?

And could he want provocation when you were despising the riches of his grace, and indulging the very spirit and temper for which millions and millions have already been consigned to everlasting wo?

He wanted neither power nor provocation. But he spared you to rouse you to repentance, to bring you to consideration, to constrain you to accept the vast, the unsearchable riches of his grace.

And will you not at last yield to the entreaties of his mercy? Will you not allow his kindness to melt your hearts, and gain the sovereignty of your affections?

Will you not permit his goodness to lead you to repentance? Will you not yet be persuaded to acquaint yourselves with him and be at peace? Will you still resist the Holy Ghost? still provoke the Lord to jealousy? and compel your adorable Redeemer to complain, that all day long he has stretched out his hands to a disobedient and a gainsaying people? Had you been cut off ten, twenty, thirty years ago, where would you this day have been? And if you persist in your carelessness and indifference, where will you be when death cuts you down?

He not only exercises the greatest patience and forbearance, but I must beseech you to observe,

2. That he employs the greatest importunity and earnestness.

What can be more descriptive of eagerness and solicitude than the language of the text? He will not be repelled. If an entrance is not instantly afforded, he uses the means to rouse attention and lead to consideration. "Behold I stand at the door and *knock*." He does not take his station at a distance, and merely call aloud. But lest we should be asleep, or foolishly occupied amidst the business or pleasures of life, he comes near to us in the dispensations of his providence and the ordinances of his grace. He takes his station at our door and *knocks*.

Many imagine that they are willing to be saved, but that he is regardless of their condition—that they would gladly be reconciled to God, but that he is backward to impart the blessings of grace and salvation. They call,

but he will not hear. They stretch out their hands, but he refuses to regard them. They read his Word, frequent his courts, and regularly maintain the practice of prayer: but they are nothing benefited by all that they can do. His ear is steeled against their petition and cry; and enclosing himself within the fastnesses of his supreme and sovereign will, he coolly leaves them to their fate.

But do these insinuations possess either the substance or shadow of reality? For their falsehood and baseness we may safely appeal to all that we see, and hear, and know of the conduct of the Son of God.

He has made the most complete and ample provision for your spiritual improvement and everlasting welfare.

But if he had been careless of your fate; above all, if he had wished your destruction, and been sternly resolved to banish you to everlasting horror, after we had risen in daring rebellion against his government, burst through every restraint which authority and kindness could impose, instead of sending his mercy after us, instead of plying and urging us by the calls and invitations of the gospel, he would have coolly left us to reap the fruit of our doings, and given himself no concern about the matter.

But is this what he has done? No. He has come all the way from the throne of glory to the cross on Calvary to seek and save us. He has so loved the world that he has given himself, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And after he has not spared himself, but delivered himself up to the death for us all, can he have any pleasure in our death, or even any indifference to our salvation? All that a man hath will he give for his life. But Jesus loved us, and gave himself for us. And was there any sacrifice more costly, any gift more precious, any pledge of his affection more strong and astonishing? And yet he so loved the world, he so loved you, that he gave himself for you.

“ O inhabitants of Jerusalem, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.” From a man to whom you had long been a benefactor and friend, to whom you had rendered many a signal and invaluable service, could you have presumed to ask the surrender of his life in your room? And after you were enemies to God in your minds and by wicked works; after you had abused the riches of his goodness, and covered yourselves with the guilt and infamy of ingratitude, hostility, and vice, could you have presumed to have lifted up your heads in his presence, and from the brightness of the Father’s glory have dared to ask him to become the propitiation for your sins, and to part with all the blood which flowed in his blessed veins? Durst you have attempted such a presumptuous request?

Yet all this, unasked, unexpected, has been spent upon your salvation, and employed to secure your peace with God, and entail a right to eternal life. *Greater* love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for

his *friends*. And is the love of Jesus *less* when he died for his *enemies*?

Had he been careless of your welfare, and determined inflexibly to leave you to your fate, would he have given warning of your danger, and employed so many affecting and powerful measures to compel you to flee from the wrath to come?

He would have left you in total ignorance of your guilt and danger. He would not have uttered one word about the sinfulness of sin, and the awful ruinous consequences of continuing in a thoughtless, graceless state. He would have employed no means to disturb your false and deceitful peace. He would have allowed you to sleep on and take your rest till the horrors of a lost eternity had closed around you.

To yourselves I again appeal, if the very reverse of all this is not the case? What more strong and astonishing measures could he have employed to raise you to consideration, and reclaim you from the error and ruin of your ways than what he has actually exerted? He has given you the Bible, fraught with the plainest warnings, and bright with the most tender promises of love and grace. Regularly as the week comes round he sends you the sacred hours of the Sabbath, to afford you leisure and opportunity to attend to what belongs to your peace, and make your calling and election sure. He meets you in youth with the labours and prayers of religious teachers and instructors. Through the various years of life, and even to the bed of death, he follows

you with calls and admonitions to repent and believe, to turn and live. He reasons and remonstrates with the ignorant and careless, debates the matter with the profane and hardened. He repeats in the ears of the presumptuous and heaven-daring the certain and dreadful consequences of their crimes, and holds out the assurance of peace, pardon, reconciliation, and eternal life to all who repent and turn.

If careless of your welfare, and indifferent to your fate, why does he crowd his word with such strong, earnest, universal exhortations to repent and believe? Why does Wisdom cry aloud, and Understanding lift up her voice, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? What mean his injunctions to ministers, to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, to do the work of evangelists, to give full proof of their ministry? What mean all the entreaties and calls which, in the course of his own ministry, he gave to the thoughtless and secure, and the tears of bitterness and anguish which he shed over the impenitent and hardened? Why did he complain when his message was rejected, that they would not come to him for life; and when they closed their hearts against the endearing messages of mercy, and the bliss-inspiring offers of his grace, why did he sit down and weep, crying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth

her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" Were you now to accost the glorious Redeemer and say, Blessed Jesus, why weepest thou? what answer would he return? "I weep not for myself. All things are mine, from the centre of the eternal throne to the farthest verge of immensity, and from the zenith of the Divine glory to the least exercise of Omnipotence. I can neither receive additional bliss nor sustain the smallest loss of felicity. But I weep because sinners will rather throw their souls into hell than admit my love and grace into their hearts: they will rather perish than repent, rather forfeit heaven and glory than renounce the world and its follies, rather take up their abode with everlasting burnings, and become the eternal derision of devils, than by sound conversion become the subjects of saving grace, and the heirs of eternal glory. When I knock they will not open—when I call they will not hearken—when I stretch out my hands they will not regard; but in spite of reason, conscience, and all that is sacred and valuable in time and in eternity, go on treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Oh, that they were wise, that they understood these things, and would lay to heart their latter end!"

If careless and indifferent about your fate, why does he place himself at the avenues to your heart, and say, "Behold I stand at the door and knock?" If a person has little or no business at the house of another, if he gets no access after knocking twice or thrice, he walks off, and gives himself no more concern about the matter. But if

he have business of great importance—if he have come upon a cause of life and death, he will take no denial, but give such loud and repeated alarms as shall rouse every inmate, and bring all within to his aid. And when Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth; when in a moment, and with ease, he could make clear riddance of his foes, and dash ten thousand worlds to dust, why does he bear with such long suffering the vessels of wrath which are fitting themselves for destruction? ring such frequent and loud alarms in the guilty conscience? lay so many obstacles and impediments in the way to hell? surround your path with the means of grace, and press on your souls the blessings of salvation? Why, leaving the recesses of his power, and the habitation of his holiness and glory, does he come to your mean and polluted abode, and cry, Behold I stand at the door and knock? Is this the language or conduct of one who is indifferent to your fate—of one who shuts out your petition and cry, and when you call will not hear, and when you seek him is determined that you shall not find him?

And what is the cause of all this importunity and earnestness? Does he need your presence and services? Can he be hurt by your perdition, or profited by your salvation? If you can add to the splendour of the sun, if you can augment the stability of the earth, or enlarge the bounds or the beauty of the universe, then, but not till then, can you be profitable to your Maker. Then, but not till then, can you plant one additional ray in his crown of glory, or yield one new and unknown accession

of joy to his heart. For he is the self-existent, independent, and all-sufficient God. Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things. To create a system, and light up a sun in its centre, is to him as easy as to open a way into your heart. For he has merely to speak, and it shall be done.

Why, then, is he so importunate and earnest to gain attention to his voice, and obtain admission into your hearts? No selfish end of his own, but sublime, exalted, boundless compassion for your souls. He sees your guilt and wretchedness, your infatuation and security. He knows that no man will give you warning, and that you yourselves entertain no apprehension of your danger. He sees what is already in your hearts, and that if by his presence he does not drive it out, you must be eternally undone. And how can he bear to see your wretchedness? What but love to you and zeal for your salvation brought him from heaven to earth? made him submit to a life of labour, and a death of pain? Are we loth to lose the object for which we have laboured long and suffered much? How reluctant then must he be to be deprived of the travail of his soul, and lose the fruit of all his tears, and toil, and blood? Did he die for our redemption? then with what a heart-rending pang must he give up to anguish unutterable, and misery never-ending, any of those precious souls whom he died to redeem? Thoughtless and unconcerned as you may be respecting the horrors of everlasting wo, he sees them well, and kindly urges you to flee from the wrath to

come. You may make a mock at sin, and sport yourselves with your own delusions, but he knows what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. His soul has the wormwood and the gall still in remembrance. Hence his fervent expostulations and earnest entreaties, Turn ye, turn ye: for why will you die? Hence the tears which he sheds at your approaching fate, and the bleeding and breaking heart with which he seals the sentence which fixes your eternal doom, How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim! how shall I deliver thee, O Israel? How often, when we little thought of the matter, have our lives been given us for a prey at his kind intercessions? When we had wearied God with our iniquities; when judgment awoke to vengeance, and justice was ready to cut us down, how often has this glorious Mediator interposed, saying, "Lord, for this once let them alone till I call again in their hearing, and knock once more at their hearts. Let me once more set life and death before them, take away the desires of their eyes with a stroke, and lay the rod of correction on their persons. Let me once more tell them of the riches of my grace, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Who knows but they will hear my voice and open the door? If they hear all shall be well: their souls shall live. If they hear my voice—well; the righteous shall hear it and be glad: the angels shall behold and rejoice. If they hear my voice and open the door—well; I shall see the travail of my soul and be satisfied. If they hear—well; they shall preserve their own

souls alive—they shall escape the power of death, and the snares of the devil, and obtain that salvation which is in me with eternal glory. If they hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and will sup with them, and they with me. All things are ready. This is the only bar that remains to be drawn to allow all the treasures of my grace, and all the resources of my glory to flow in. With toil and pain have I accomplished all the other parts of redeeming mercy, and this, this alone is awaiting to crown my labours, and place them in the possession of all that is necessary to their boundless, endless joy. Behold I stand at the door and knock.”

But will his patience always last? Will his goodness always be abused? Will his gospel be always preached to those whom it does not profit? No. Let me conjure you to observe,

3. That his stay is limited.

It is not said that he sits down as if he intended to stay till the sinner has taken out his sleep, finished his worldly affairs, or satiated himself with the pleasures and amusements of life. To intimate that his stay is limited, that he is still on his feet, and that if admittance is refused he is ready and determined to depart, he says, “Behold I *stand* at the door?” He may have long patience with the careless and the hardened, but his spirit will not always strive. Life is short, and at the best uncertain. Multitudes are now in the place of wo who expected to have been high in salvation and the climes of bliss. They knew that religion was necessary for their eternal

welfare. They knew that ignorance, indolence, sloth, frivolity, never would carry them away from the wrath to come, nor land them in the world of light, and therefore they resolved that some time or other they would become really religious. They would give up their hearts to God, and be in earnest for eternal life. But they resolved to wait till they should reach the age of sixty, or three-score and ten, and then they would be really earnest for eternal life. But before the year arrived to commence their course of piety, what came? An inflammation, a fever, and they were seized. Before they knew, they were cut down; and when they were dreaming of many happy cheerful days, their soul was required of them. They were confronted with their Judge, and being unfit for his presence, they were banished from his tribunal into the horrors of everlasting darkness and the sorrows of never-ending despair.

And have you made any covenant with death, that you stifle your convictions, and go on still in your trespasses? Does it require any mighty effort to extinguish your breath, and send your souls into the world of spirits? Are your brows brass, or your strength the strength of stones? Must the earth cleave asunder and swallow you up alive? Must stones be hurled at your heads, or some tremendous convulsion shake the solid globe to reach your persons, and bring you down to the grave? What is your life? Is it not even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away?

III. Why is Jesus so importunate and earnest to get admission into the heart?

It is for no selfish purpose of his own. He is not driven out of a dwelling, and compelled to wander through creation to seek a rest and shelter wherever he can find them. In himself he is infinitely great, and eternally blessed and glorious. He is possessor of all things in heaven and in earth. Laying his essence on immensity, he pervades all space, and inhabits eternity. If the creation which he has already framed were too small, too limited, or mean for his residence, he has the command of all the resources of Omnipotence, and in a moment, and with ease, could extend the bounds of the universe, and surround himself with worlds on worlds, more magnificent and stupendous than any that he has yet framed.

The cause of all his importunity and ardour, is his generous, adorable compassion for our souls.

While he is shut out do you know what is the consequence? Guilt and misery, condemnation and wrath, present wretchedness, and the cause of everlasting wo are shut in; Satan is shut in; and the soul shall be shut out of heaven.

There is no necessity for a graceless, Christless creature to labour hard to bring down the displeasure of the Most High, and entail on himself everlasting perdition. They are on him already. He that believeth not is condemned already. He cannot see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. It is Christ alone who redeems

us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. And while he is excluded and rejected, what peace can be possessed in the conscience, or entertained towards God? While the insulting flag of rebellion and defiance continues to fly, what communication of kindness can be sent in, or what suspension of the resistless and unerring artillery of heaven? Every graceless creature is loaded with much guilt; and the least transgression deserves the wrath and curse of God both in this life and that which is to come. And oh, who knows the power of his anger? Dreadful as it must be to be bruised beneath the weight of a mountain, whenever the conscience is awakened, the sinner will a thousand times rather be crushed beneath the hills, than encounter the wrath of the Lamb. Then will they cry to the rocks and mountains, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Jesus comes into the soul for purposes the most great, blessed, and glorious that the mind can conceive, or that a God of grace can perform. In himself he is the Most High God, possessor of all things in heaven and in earth. In him all fulness dwells. He is the Father of mercies and the God of love,—the Mediator betwixt God and man,—the author and finisher of our faith,—the administrator of all the treasures of the new covenant. Wherever he comes, he comes in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace. He comes in all the strength of

Omnipotence, in all the kindness of redeeming mercy, and in all the compassionate tenderness, and glorious liberality of the God of love. His advent to the soul is the most interesting era in its existence. Its admission into heaven is delightful—wonderful. There it takes its final leave of all the toils and weaknesses of mortality. There it starts forth in all the elasticity of immortal youth; there it joins the general assembly and church of the first-born; there it sees God, and expatiates in all the amplitude of celestial bliss, and all the fulness of uncreated joy.

But the admission of the soul into heaven is only the natural and necessary termination of its religious career. It is only the gradual expansion and the full maturing of those principles and enjoyments which begin when grace first takes possession of the heart.

The momentous era in the history of an immortal is the day when the bolts, bars, and obstacles laid in the way of the Redeemer's admission are removed, and the King of glory comes under our roof, and deigns to take up his abode in our soul. From that day he begins to bless us, the provisions of the everlasting covenant are poured around us, the path to the highest height in glory is laid open, the weakness of man is linked to the strength of Omnipotence, and the fulness of the infinite and all-sufficient Godhead is presented to our enjoyment and use.

On entering the soul,

1. Jesus comes to enlighten it.

Whilst Christ is shut out, the heart of man is dark, desolate, and dreary. It is like a dungeon or the shadow of death. We are without God and without hope. We have no clear, just, nor comfortable views of God, of heaven, of eternity. In the business of life, in the trifles of earth and time, irreligious men may display splendid talents and the most unconquerable industry, but in every thing connected with the subject of religion, in all that relates to the most sublime and commanding prospects of man, and the most lofty and endearing displays of the excellences of Deity, the irreligious are fools and babes, and know nothing as they ought to know.

But in Jesus are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The power that clothed creation with the mantle of light, that infused into the pages of inspiration their truth, richness, and splendour, resides in himself. He can not only open the Scriptures, but likewise our understandings to know them; lead us into all truth, and unfold the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ. Whenever he enters a heart, he gives with authority the command, Arise and shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of God is risen upon thee. He strips off the veil of ignorance and unbelief, and shines into the heart to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. He bestows an unction from the Holy One whereby we understand all things, and makes us light in the Lord.

Some clouds may occasionally return to darken the horizon, to disturb our peace, and sadden our souls. But sooner or later these shall be all broken and dispersed.

The sun of righteousness, when once risen, will never set. He will hold on in his beauteous and brilliant career, shining with new splendour, and dispensing fresh light and energy to the soul, till the dawn of grace be exchanged for the blaze of glory. The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day: a day unsullied with a cloud, and which no night shall ever close.

2. He comes to adorn it.

Nothing can be more filthy and polluted than the soul of a sinner. It is represented by all that is vile and loathsome in nature. It is compared to the deformity of a leper, the putrid matter of an ulcer, the mire in which the sow wallows, the poison of asps, and the vapour of an open sepulchre.

But, however forcible, these representations are unable to reach its real enormity, to express all its turpitude, and convey a just idea of the filthiness of that soul which is degraded and polluted by sin.

But Jesus comes to sanctify and cleanse it. He comes to remove its deformity and filth, to clothe it with the garment of salvation, and cover it with the robe of righteousness. He comes to sanctify and cleanse it, to form it after his own image, to render it all glorious within, and make it a habitation for himself through the Spirit.

Think of the contrast betwixt such a man as David and a child of Belial; betwixt Paul, who could declare, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain, and such a

man as Ahaz, who sold himself to do iniquity: a man who shines in the beauties of holiness, who lives in heaven who grows in grace, and is daily acquiring more complete conformity to the character of the Lord Jesus Christ;—contrast the character of such a man with that of one who lives in frivolity, fritters away the precious moments God has given him, grovels among the low and ignoble pursuits of earth and time, and is perpetually sinking lower and lower in filth and impurity, and then you will see the mighty obligations which we owe to the purifying presence of the Son of God.

But great as the purity of believers may at present be, their sanctification is still in its infancy. To form a just idea of its extent and grandeur, we must break away from the things of earth and time, we must penetrate the heaven of heavens, and carry our view forward to eternity. Who are these that are clothed with white robes, and whence came they? These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. These are they in whose hearts Christ dwelt by faith. He has now presented them before his Father without spot or wrinkle. Their prayer is heard and answered, Wash thou me, and I shall be clean. The universe contains no character so lovely and adorable as Jesus. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. But to this great and glorious being every believer is conformed. As we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, we bear the image of the Lord from heaven. We are in the world even as

Christ also was in the world. Whom God did foreknow, them also did he predestinate to be conformed unto the image of his Son.

3. He comes to enrich it.

He does not come empty handed. The thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and destroy. Jesus comes to save, enrich, and bless us. In him all fulness dwells. The stores of nature, the bounties of providence, the treasures of the everlasting gospel, and all the plenitude of the created universe, are absolutely at his command, and completely at his disposal. It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and that out of his fulness we should all receive even grace for grace. His kindness and generosity never can be gratified till he impart to us all the riches of grace, and put us in possession of the whole covenant fulness of God.

I say covenant fulness. Though Christianity is intended to exalt, ennoble, and dignify us, it is not intended to deify us, or make us divine. The incommunicable, essential attributes of God are infinitely beyond our reach; but with this limitation and reserve, nothing is kept back. All are ours. Whatever he is, and whatever he possesses, as far as our limited natures can receive, are employed for our use and advantage. His righteousness is of a perfect nature and infinite value. But we are entitled to all the benefits and blessings which it can impart. He is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Is he a Son? So are we. To as many as received him gave he power to

become the Sons of God. Is he an heir? So are we. If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. Is he in the possession of happiness and honour? He makes us sit with him in heavenly places. And what shall I say more? His glory is ours. "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them."

To yourselves I appeal, if the lines have not fallen to you in pleasant places? if ye have not a goodly heritage? Your inheritance extends from the riches of grace in time, to the glories of heaven through eternity; from the temporal comforts with which you are surrounded, up to the all-sufficiency of the almighty and ever-blessed God.

4. He comes to prepare it for heaven, and at last introduce it into boundless and eternal glory.

Many things attach the Christian to life. He occupies a body of flesh and blood, which is as sensible of pain as the bodies of the worldly and the worthless; and in common with all the children of Adam, naturally shrinks from death and the grave, from corruption and worms. He loves the society of his family and friends, and rejoices to promote their improvement and prosperity: and as long as it shall be agreeable to the divine will, and for the divine glory, he is willing to live and labour still longer for their happiness and welfare. He takes a deep interest in the peace and prosperity of the church. The world lies in wickedness, and is groaning under a curse. It is condemned already, and is filling up the cup of wrath to the brim. He would like to break up the security and carnality of the graceless; to

put an end to their deceitful and ruinous repose, and pluck some of them as brands from the burning.

But having opened his heart to receive the Saviour, and seen the salvation of God, he is willing and confident rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. He has a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

Racked and harassed with a fever, is it sweet to lay our head on the pillow, and know that when the gentle sleep is over, we shall wake in health and vigour? Is it delightful to know that when we have crossed the threshold of the dungeon, our fetters shall be knocked off, and we shall enjoy all the elasticity and buoyancy of independence and freedom? How transporting and joyous is it to the believer, fatigued and exhausted with the trials of time, with the annoyance of sin, and the blasphemy of the wicked, to rush into the arms of Immanuel, to spring from all the cares and trials of mortality, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, bound into the midst of the Paradise of God, see him as he is, and, beholding openly his glory, be changed into the same image!

THE END.

WORKS BY DR. HAMILTON.

- THE MOURNER IN ZION COMFORTED. 12mo.
2d edition, 5s.
- A DEFENCE OF THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE
OF THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST, from
the Erroneous Representations of Modern Millenari-
ans. 12mo. 5s.
- A DISSERTATION intended to Explain, Establish,
and Vindicate the DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.
12mo. 5s.
- THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LAW BY THE
GOSPEL, or the Practical Influence of Evangelical
Truth. 12mo. 5s.
- THE YOUNG COMMUNICANT'S REMEM-
BRANCER. 12mo. 3s. 6d.
- AN ESSAY ON THE ASSURANCE OF SALVA-
TION. 18mo. 2d edition. 2s. 6d.
- REMARKS ON UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION.
12mo. 2s.
- MEMOIRS OF MISS FANNY GRAHAM, 2d edi-
tion. 6d.
- A CONSOLATORY ADDRESS TO CHRISTIANS,
upon the death of their Believing Friends. 1s. 6d.





